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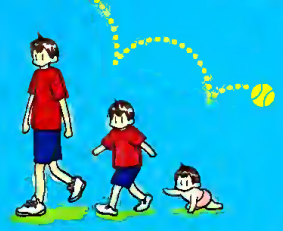

つむじフェチです。
頭部よりちょいうしろに
あるのが理想です。
（別に、だからどうということもない。）

勝木 光

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

勝木 光

17

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

KCM4506

KC

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

17

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KC MAGAZINE

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

ベイビーステップ

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ベイビーステップ 17 勝木光

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Baby

ベイビー

17

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Baby Step
ステップ
人物紹介
エーちゃん
丸尾栄一郎
STC所属。「次の全日本ジュニアで優勝、そしてプロへ」が口癖。そこで優勝できなければプロを諦めるという条件付きで、テニス最優先の生活を送っている。同じ夢を持つナツは心の支え。相思相愛の二人は、ついに交際開始！
ナツ
鷹崎奈津
関東ジュニアも善戦中!!
STC所属。関東トップレベルの選手でプロ志望。理論派・エーちゃんとは真逆の超感覚派で、それが互いの刺激にただいまエーちゃんとの恋もテニスも絶好調!!
青井コーチ
STCでのエーちゃんのコーチ元プロ選手という経験に裏付けされた指導でエーちゃんをサポート
佐々木梅子
エーちゃんの試合に必ず駆けつけてくれる心優しい応援団。梅子はエーちゃんへの想い実らず失恋
影山小次郎
梅子はエーちゃんの親友
清水亜希
コーチである母親と二人三脚でプロを目指す。ジュニア日本一の選手で、ナツは彼女に4戦全敗中
ここで勝てば、全日本ジュニア出場決定！
運命の2回戦エーちゃンVS井出義明!!
観客を魅せるテニス・・・ここはさながら井出劇場！
理論派
感覚派
重圧をコントロールできれば、勝機は絶対に!!
プレッシャー
相手に重圧をイメージ、本能で先アレ!!井出に集中!!
接戦を制し、全日本ジュニアの切符を手にするのは!?
激闘、ついに決着の時!!
第1シート 難波江優
第2シート 岡田隆行
第3シート 荒谷貢
ライバルは他にも!!

Baby Steps

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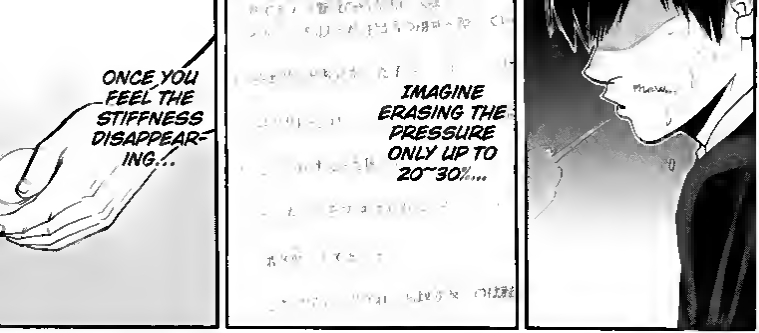
#158: IMPULSE

#159: TAKAGI SAKUYA

#160: CARDS ON HAND

#161: PERSISTENT

to Giant Strides


ONCE YOU FEEL THE STIFFNESS DISAPPEAR-ING...
IMAGINE ERASING THE PRESSURE ONLY UP TO 20~30%...

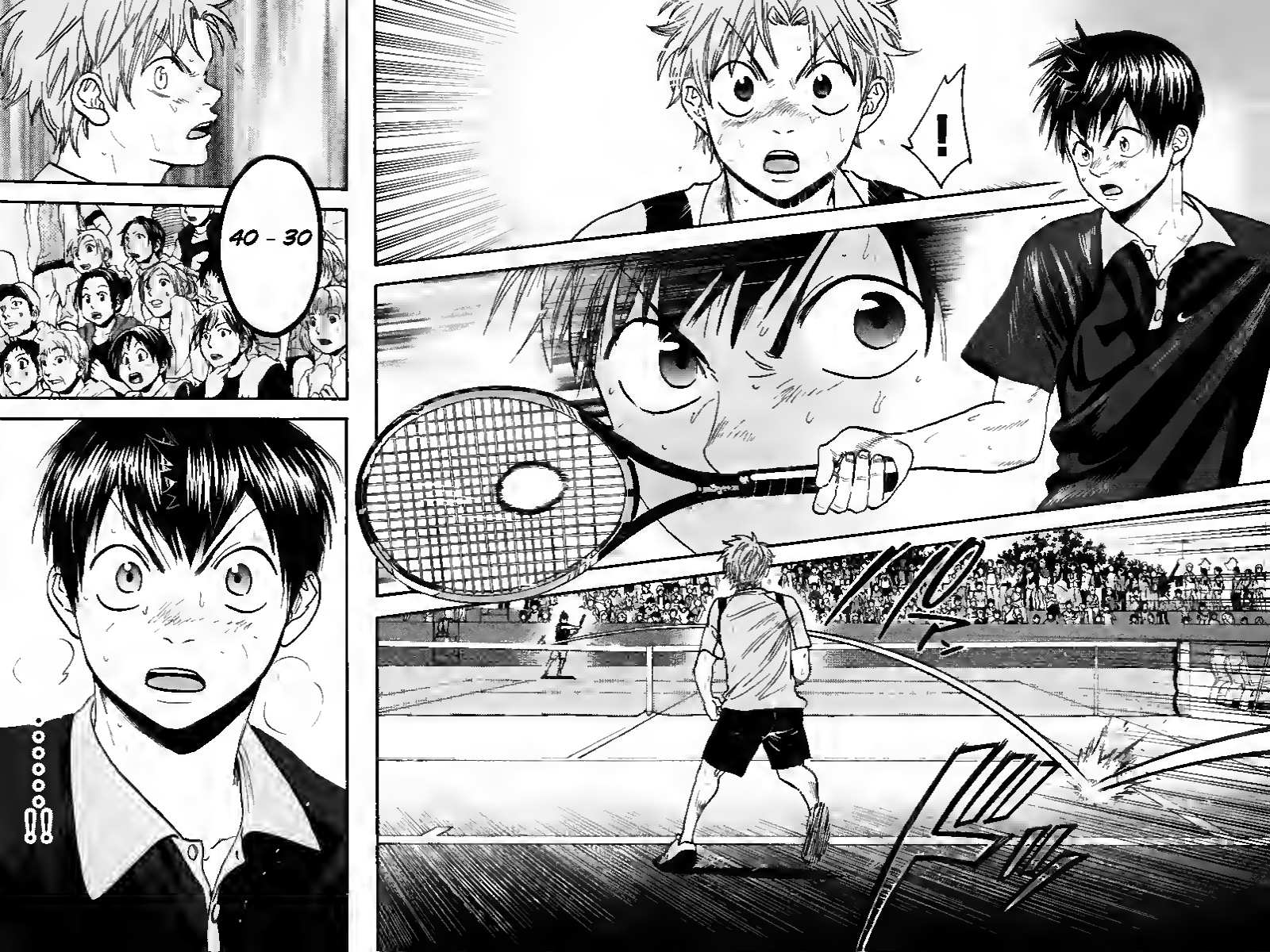
FOCUS...
#152: OPPORTUNITY

STRONG TOPSPIN TO THE SIDE!!

HA
30 - 30
YES!!
I KNEW IT..!
THIS FEELS REALLY GREAT.

HA
KEEP ON CONCEN-TRATING!!
IF HE TAKES THIS ONE, IT'LL BE 30 - 40.
BUT IT'S STILL 30 - 30.
MARUO MADE A COMEBACK FROM LOVE - 30.
YOU REALLY CAN'T TELL WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN NEXT IN THIS MATCH.

ARGH
HE'S GOING FOR THE CROSS!

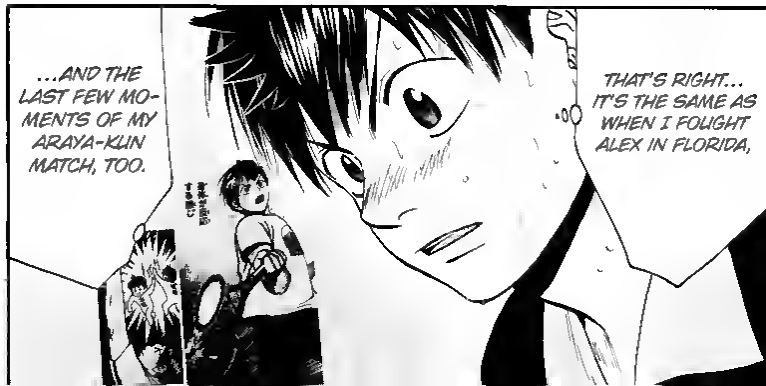

40 - 30
!
!!.....

THIS FEEL-ING...
I'VE HAD IT BEFORE...

GAME
...GAME, MARUO. COUNT: 6 – 5. FINAL SET!
!!
ARE YOU SERIOUS! MARUO TAKES THE FIRST LEAD!!
IDE!! YOU HAVE TO KEEP!!

ALL RIGHT, NICE KEEP!!
SINCE HE CAN'T AFFORD TO ALLOW A BREAK NO MATTER WHAT,
IT'S HUGE THAT HE WAS ABLE TO KEEP THIS.
AS LONG AS YOU CONTROL THE PRESSURE PROPERLY,

YOU CAN DEFINITELY BEAT IDE.
カキ


THAT'S RIGHT... IT'S THE SAME AS WHEN I FOUGHT ALEX IN FLORIDA,
...AND THE LAST FEW MOMENTS OF MY ARAYA-KUN MATCH, TOO.

ALTHOUGH I DON'T FEEL AS MUCH FATIGUE AS BACK THEN, I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I CAN REMAIN IN THIS STATE
I'VE GOT TO KEEP THAT IN MIND
FOR MY NEXT GAME
IF I CAN MAINTAIN THIS CONDITION EVEN JUST FOR THE NEXT GAME
DOES IT MEAN CONSCIOUSLY IMAGINING THE PRESSURE AND TRUSTING MY INSTINCTS FOR MY PLAYS...
ENDED UP CREATING A GOOD BALANCE WITHOUT ME REALIZING IT?
...I SHOULDN'T FORGET, THOUGH, MY STREAK IN THE MATCH AGAINST ARAYA-KUN WAS ONLY TEMPORARY.
MY REASON AND MY INSTINCTS REACHED AN IDEAL BALANCE
AND HELPED ME MAKE REALLY GOOD MOVES.

NEXT ONE IS THE FINAL HURDLE... BUT AS LONG AS I OVERCOME THIS ONE, I'LL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO WIN
I'M SURE HE'S GONNA TRY TO FINISH THIS WITH THE NEXT ONE...
I GET STRONGER THE MORE YOU GUYS BELIEVE IN ME.
SO EVERYONE, GIVE ME MORE STRENGTH.

IDE!
YOSHI!!
MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY!!
WITH MY STRENGTH, I'LL DEFINITELY..

ハッ
ハッ
カキ
カキ
カキ
TIME!

JUST LIKE BEFORE...
I'VE GOT TO MAINTAIN THAT STATE FROM THE PREVIOUS GAME...
IN ORDER TO BREAK AND WIN...
CENTER!!
THEN LEAVE THE REST TO MY IN-STINCTS!!
ONCE THE GAME STARTS
FOCUS ON IDE-KUN!!

0 - 15
YES!!
RGH

EVERY-
THING'S STILL
GOOD...
HA
COUNT
AS A
PINCH
JUST
YET!!
FOR
ME, THIS
DOESN'T
EVEN...

A DROP SHOT HERE?!
CAN MARUO MAKE IT?!
IDE'S ...
MOVING UP THE COURT!!

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DROP SHOT!!
#153: EVERYTHING I CAN DO RIGHT NOW
CAN MARUO MAKE IT?!

GO!!
GARRR
HRG

SHOOT
ooo!
OUNCE
RGH

DA

0 - 30
WO ...
WOAAA AAAH?!
WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT!!?
IT WAS A BETWEEN-THE-LEGS SHOT!!
HOW DID HE DO THAT?!
THAT WAS THE ONLY THING HE COULD DO TO RETURN THAT.
ARE YOU SERI-OUS?

I KNEW IT... THIS IS MY BEST CHANCE TO TAKE THE GAME!!
BRING IT ON!!

SO STRONG!!
WHICH SIDE IS HE GONNA HIT?!
CRAP ... THAT WAS WEAK!
!?

!?
ANOTHER DROP SHOT?!
TCH

15 - 30
HEY, HEY A BETWEEN-THE-LEGS SHOT AND A BACK-TO-BACK DROP SHOT IN THIS SITUATION? WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS MATCH...?
AND SINCE THEY'RE ACTUALLY GOING IN, THESE TWO ARE ABSURD.
HOW CAN HE GO FOR THE SHOT THAT WAS JUST RETURNED?
YEAH!!
THAT'S IT, IDE!! IF HE BITES YOU, BITE HIM BACK TWICE!!
NO!

THE THOUGHT OF "ONLY TWO POINTS LEFT" WAS ACTING AS ADDITIONAL PRESSURE.
BUT MY EARLIER RETURN WAS AT FAULT...
THE BACK-TO-BACK DROP SHOT CERTAINLY CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD...
強烈
I HAVE TO REFLECT BACK EVERY TIME THE SITUATION CHANGES...
FROM THE VERY START...
THEN I HAVE TO CONTINUE DOING THAT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND HOW, BUT REPEATING THAT HAS BROUGHT ME TO MY BEST CONDITION.
だっ
ONCE I CLEARLY DEFINE THE PRESSURE IN MY HEAD, IMAGINE ERASING IT BUT LEAVE A LITTLE BIT BEHIND.

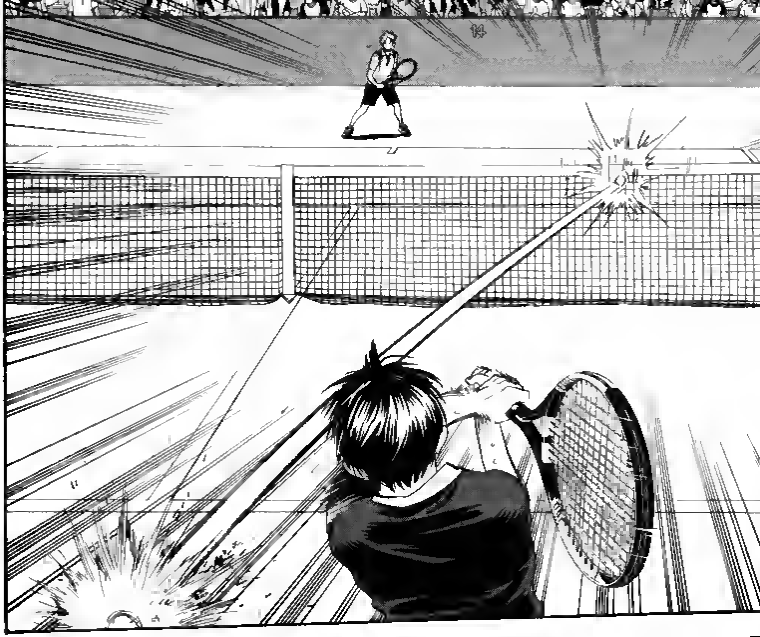
IT'S EVERYTHING I CAN DO
RIGHT NOW!
THAT'S ALL I CAN DO RIGHT NOW...

10アーン

15 - 40.
おお
おお
M-MATCH POINT!!
MARUO'S THE FIRST ONE TO GET A MATCH POINT!!

EI-CHAN, FINISH IT RIGHT HERE!!
YOU CAN DO IT, MARUO-KUN!!
ARE YOU SERIOUS?! IDE'S GOING TO LOSE ALREADY?
IT'S NOT DECIDED YET!
YOU CAN DO IT.. YOU CAN DO IT...
YOSHI, YOU AREN'T DONE YET!!
MATCH POINT IS SOMETHING YOU DON'T EVEN WANNA SEE FROM A FAR DISTANCE.
BUT...
IF A MAN CAN SHOW HIS ULTIMATE STRENGTH UNDER THESE SORTS OF SUPER-CRITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES...
わあああああ

THAT MAN WOULD BE IDE.



30 – 40.

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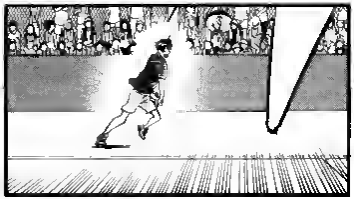
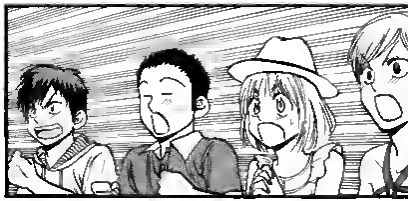
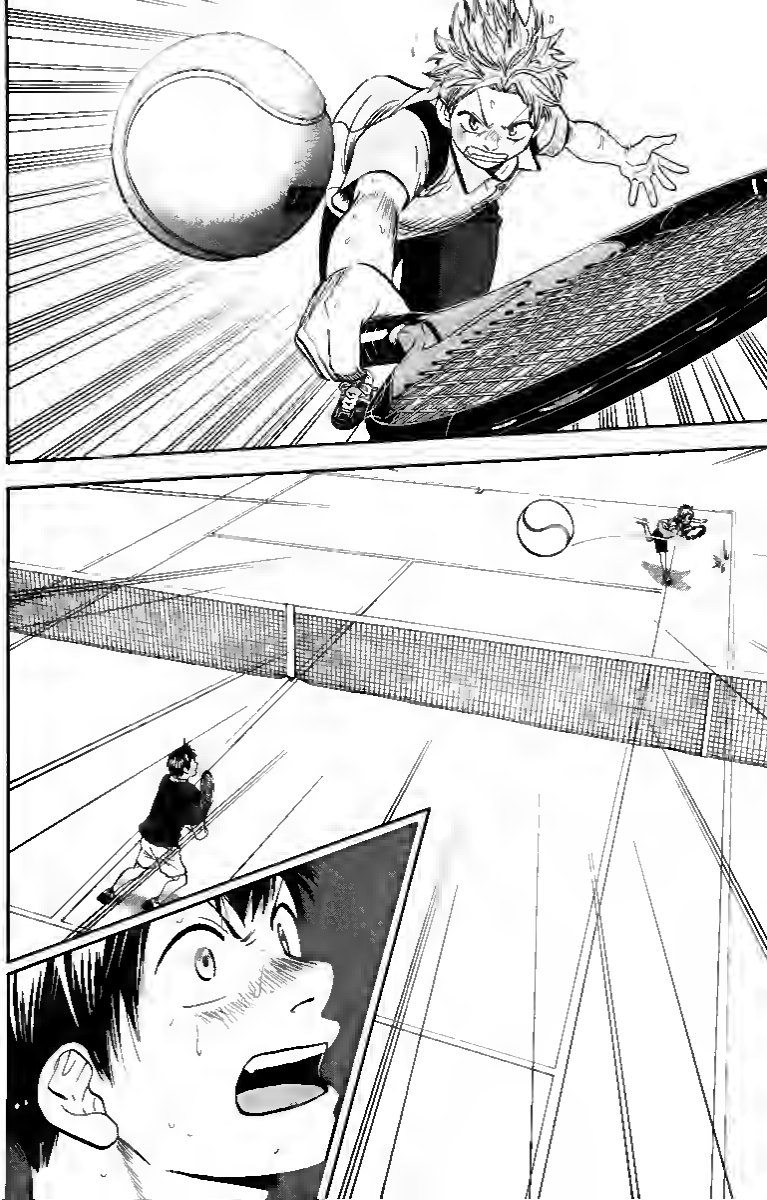
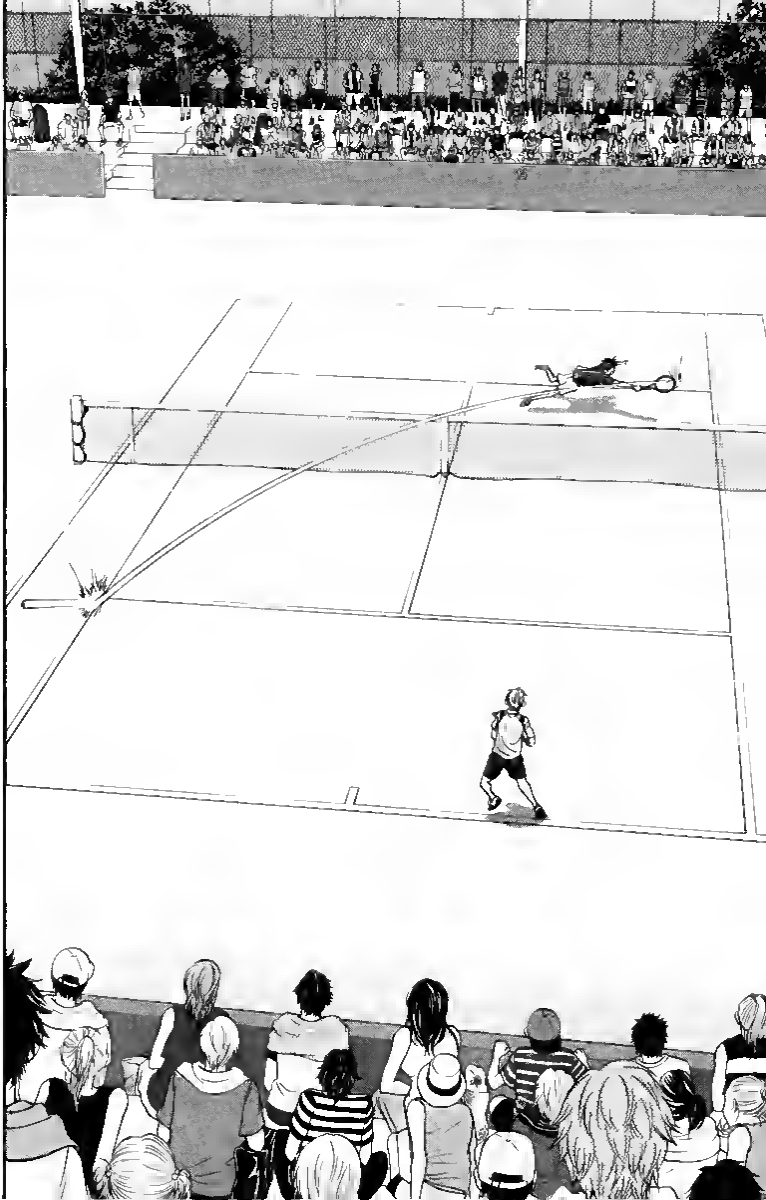
#154: FORWARD

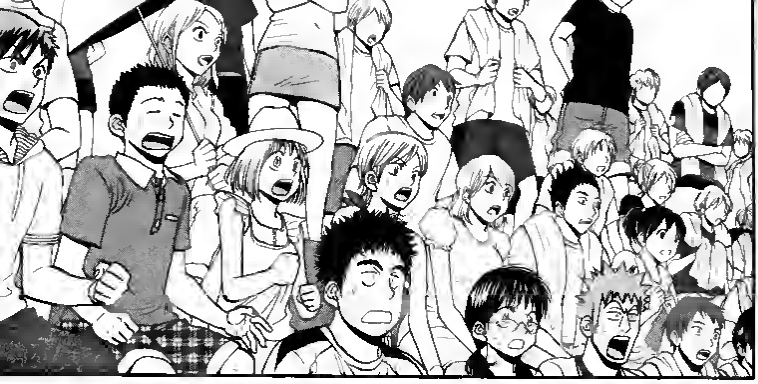
1/6



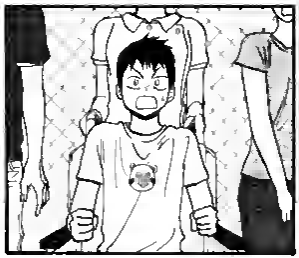








RVCA



あ
あ
あ
あ
ルイ
弱っ

A-AMAZING!!
あ
あ
あ
あ
INCREDIBLE... MARUO FINALLY...
HE FINALLY BEAT IDE!!
YOU DID IT, EI-CHAN!!
YOU WERE BOTH AWESOME!!
THAT MEANS ...
IT'S IN...
IT WAS SO NERVE-WRECKING!!
I WON!!
THAT WAS SUPER AWESOME!!

YOU WERE SUPER COOL EVEN IF YOU LOST!!
IDE, YOU ARE STILL THE BEST!!
ARGH~~~~ DAMN IT~~~~
BUT, WELL...
IT WAS THE GREATEST MATCH,
SO CAN'T HELP IT.

やったあああ

あ
あ
あ
あ
EH... AH.. YEAH..
I WAS SO MOVED!!
C'MON, WHERE'S YOUR SHOWMANSHIP.
YOU TWO ARE GREAT!!

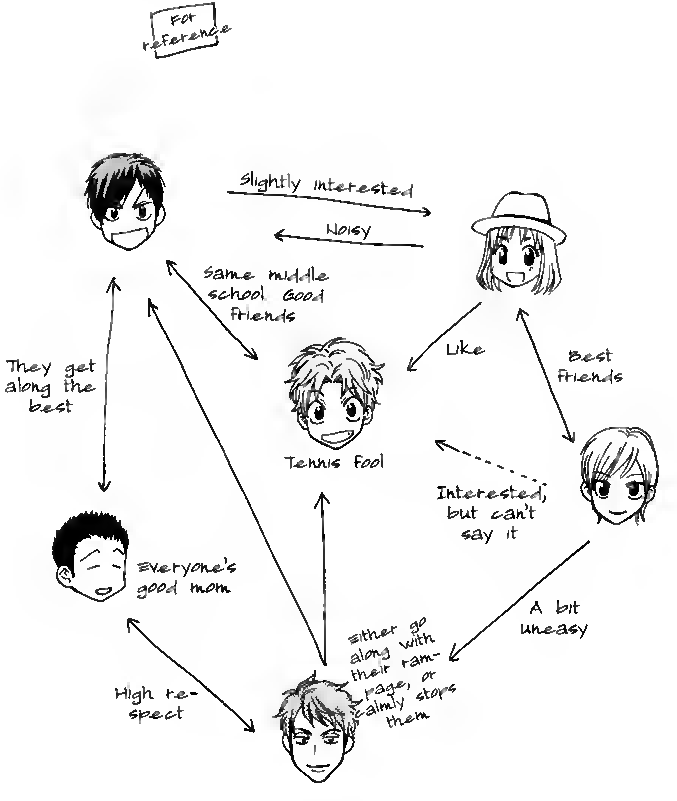
AGAINST THAT IDE-KUN...
I REALLY WON
あ
あ
あ
MARUO!! YOU'VE GOT TO WORK EXTRA HARD IN THE NATIONALS FOR IDE'S SAKE, TOO!!

I'LL GET TO HEAR THIS MUCH CHEERING AGAIN?

I WONDER HOW MANY TIMES...

あ
あ
あ

WITH THIS, I CAN KEEP MOVING FORWARD.
わあああ


For reference
Slightly interested
Noisy
Same middle school Good friends
Like
Best friends
They get along the best
Tennis Fool
Interested, but can't say it
Everyone's good mom
A bit uneasy
High respect
Either go along with their rampage, or calmly stops them

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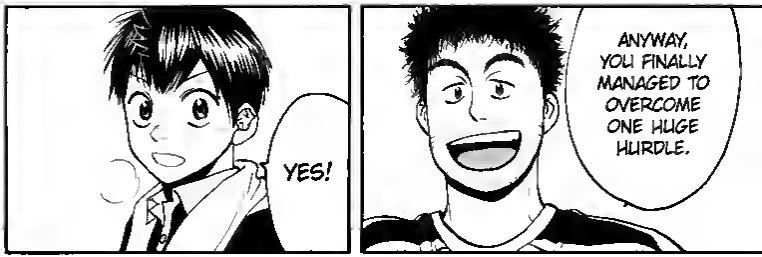
EI-
CHA~N!!
#155: ZONE

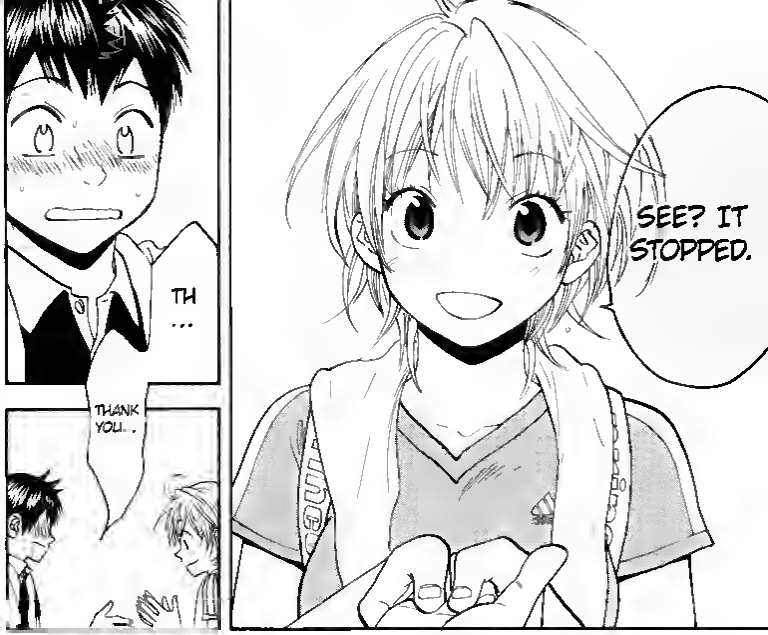
ADVANCING TO THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR!
WO AH
CONGR-ATULA-TIONS!!

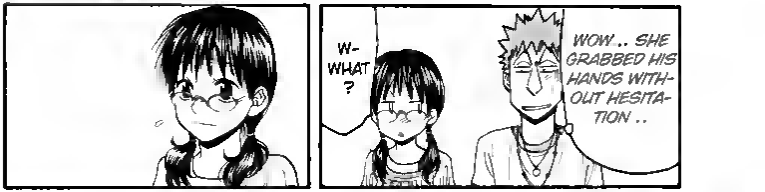
YOUR OPPONENT WAS DEFINITELY A TOP-LEVEL PLAYER EVEN IN THE NATIONALS.
I WAS ON THE EDGE OF MY SEAT THE WHOLE TIME.
BUT THAT WAS ONE HELL OF A MATCH!
CONGRATULATIONS, MARUO-KUN!

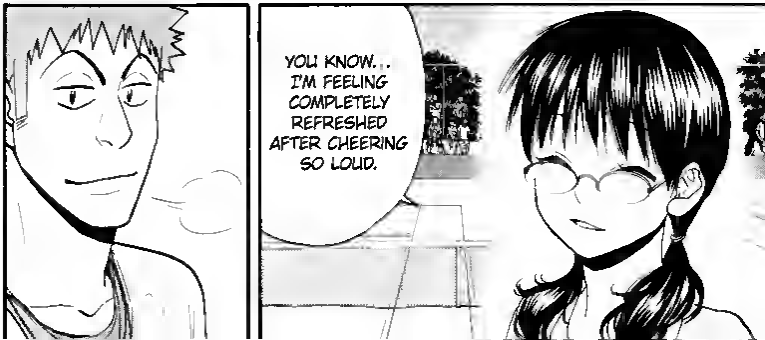

YES!
ANYWAY, YOU FINALLY MANAGED TO OVERCOME ONE HUGE HURDLE.

NOW WE CAN GO TO THE NATIONALS TOGETHER!
YUP!
KAGEYAMA, SASAKI-SAN, THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT, TOO.
I COULD TELL THAT YOU CAME, NACCHAN.
YOU WON YOUR MATCH, RIGHT?

WHY'S IT STARTING TO SHAKE NOW?
HUH ...?
ぶるぶる
ぶるぶる
ぶるぶる
ぶるぶる
ぎゅっ
ぎゅーっ
EH?!
IT'S OKAY.


SEE? IT STOPPED.
TH ...
THANK YOU..


W- WHAT ?
WOW.. SHE GRABBED HIS HANDS WITHOUT HESITATION..

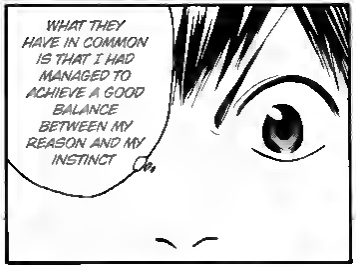

YOU KNOW... I'M FEELING COMPLETELY REFRESHED AFTER CHEERING SO LOUD.

I WAS ALWAYS UNDER INCREDIBLE PRESSURE,
BUT WHEN I STARTED CLEARLY RECOGNIZING THE SOURCES OF PRESSURE RATHER THAN RUNNING AWAY, I WAS ABLE TO MOVE REALLY WELL...
AH... YES, I WAS SURPRISED, TOO.
BUT YOU WERE REALLY INCREDIBLE FOR THE LAST FEW POINTS.
TOWARDS THE END, MY BODY MOVEMENT AND MY BRAIN PROCESSING GOT EXTREMELY GOOD.
THAT MADE ME PLAY EVEN BETTER, SO I KEPT EXPERIMENTING.
IN THE END, I TRIED IMAGINING ERASING THE PRESSURE WHILE STILL LEAVING A LITTLE BIT BEHIND
OR WHY I WAS ABLE TO MOVE SO WELL. I HONESTLY HAVE NO IDEA.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I WAS ABLE TO REMAIN SO RELAXED IN THAT DESPERATE SITUATION...
YES... BUT YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU WERE REALLY DOING ALL THAT?
In that situation...

CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC?
UMM... I COULD SEE MY OPPONENT, THE BALL AND THE COURT REALLY CLEARLY,
BUT I WAS SO FOCUSED THAT I COULD BARELY SEE, HEAR OR PAY ATTENTION TO ANYTHING ELSE.
MAYBE YOU WERE IN THE "ZONE".
ZONE?
THEY SAY HUMANS ONLY USE 30% OF THEIR POTENTIAL EVEN WHEN THEY THINK THEY'RE DOING THEIR BEST.
YOU COULD SAY THE ZONE IS A STATE WHERE THAT RESTRAINT IS REMOVED.
IT'S PRETTY COMMON TO HEAR A PERSON WHO ALMOST GOT INTO A CAR ACCIDENT SAYING "I WAS SAVED BECAUSE IT FELT LIKE I WAS SEEING THINGS IN SLOW MOTION."
THEY SAY THIS IS THE RESULT OF REALIZING ONE'S TRUE POTENTIAL BY GETTING INTO THE ZONE UPON FACING A LIFE-THREATENING SITUATION.

I HEARD THERE ARE EVEN PLAYERS WHO CAN CONSCIOUSLY CREATE SUCH A STATE IN THE EXTREME TOP LEVELS OF THE SPORTING WORLD.
YOU CAN CREATE IT?!
I THOUGHT IT HAPPENED BECAUSE VARIOUS CONDITIONS WERE SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY FULFILLED, BUT ..
THAT STATE ..
IT DEFINITELY FELT LIKE IDE-KUN WOULD GET EVEN STRONGER FROM THERE ON..
SO I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE WON IF I HADN'T MANAGED TO BREAK THERE.
I GUESS IN THE END, YOU WERE ABLE TO MATCH THAT IDE BY GOING INTO THE ZONE YOURSELF.
FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, IDE IS A PLAYER WHO ENTERS A STATE EXTREMELY CLOSE TO THE ZONE WHEN HE'S FACING A DRAMATIC SITUATION
NO... REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENED, THIS VICTORY IS A FRUIT OF YOUR HARD WORK.

I CERTAINLY MIGHT HAVE GONE INTO THE ZONE WITH MY OWN STRENGTH...
IF I MANAGED TO GET INTO THAT STATE BY VISUALIZING THE PRESSURE IN MY HEAD AND TRYING TO PLAY INSTINCTIVELY...
FRUIT OF MY HARD WORK...


WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON IS THAT I HAD MANAGED TO ACHIEVE A GOOD BALANCE BETWEEN MY REASON AND MY INSTINCT

AND TODAY'S MATCH..
THERE WAS ALSO THE MATCH AGAINST ARAYA-KUN.
I FELT A SIMILAR SENSATION DURING MY MATCH AGAINST ALEX.

IF I LEARN TO CONSCIOUSLY CREATE THIS STATE CALLED "THE ZONE"...
タイム!

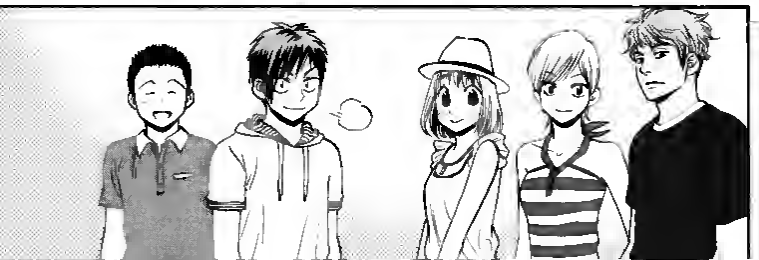
APPARENTLY IDE LOST!
YOU SERIOUS? TO WHOM?!
Match in Court No.9 has ended.
Would the next scheduled players please proceed to the court in a timely manner
I'M SORRY.
I COULDN'T KEEP THE PROMISE EVEN THOUGH YOU CAME ALL THE WAY HERE TO WATCH.

SO...
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
HUH?!
SO ONCE MY LEGS GET BETTER, I'LL GO BEAT HIM!
I SEE... SO THAT'S HOW IT IS.
HA HA ...
I'M GONNA START FROM TODAY!
WAIT... DO YOU EVEN KNOW HOW TO PLAY TENNIS?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT..?

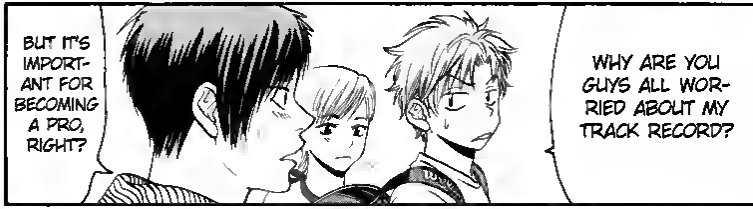
'CUZ TENNIS IS THE BEST!!
THAT'S GOOD!! THAT'S SU-PER-DUPER GOOD!!

YUP!

YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT!
BUT BEATING HIM WOULD MEAN YOU'RE GONNA BECOME MY RIVAL.



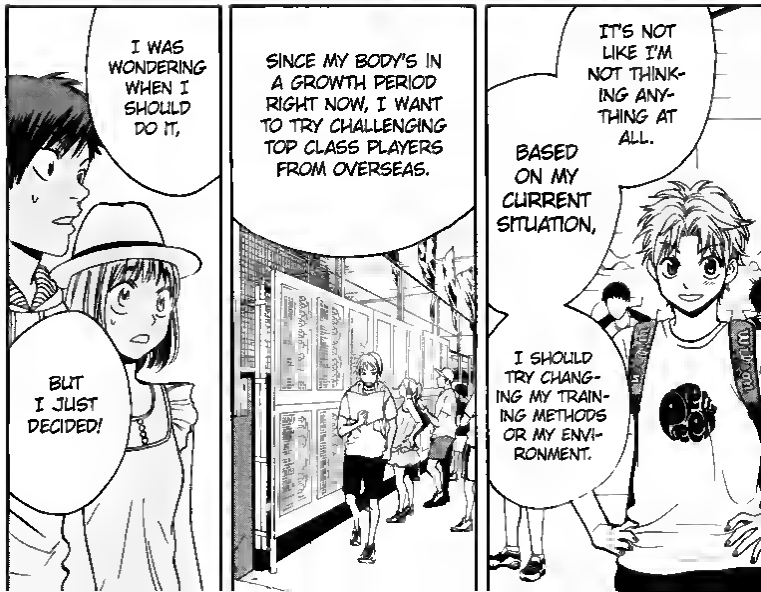
WELL, THERE'S STILL THE INTER HIGH, SO I'M SURE HE'LL PRODUCE BETTER RESULTS AFTER GETTING TO REST FOR A BIT.
BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOSHI CAN'T GO TO THE NATIONALS.


BUT IT'S IMPORTANT FOR BECOMING A PRO, RIGHT?
WHY ARE YOU GUYS ALL WORRIED ABOUT MY TRACK RECORD?

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR ME RIGHT NOW IS TO TAKE REVENGE ON HIM, SINCE IT'S BECAUSE MY SKILLS WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH.
THOSE THINGS ALL COME TOGETHER AS LONG AS I KEEP DOING WHAT I NEED TO DO.

I'M GONNA GO OVERSEAS SOMETIME THIS YEAR.
Wilson
Wilson
WOAH?!
HUH?!
I THINK I'LL HEAD OUT RIGHT AWAY ONCE THE INTER HIGH'S OVER.
WAIT... W-WHERE?
WELL, IT'S TENNIS, SO PROBABLY SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA OR EUROPE.
WAIT A SECOND! HAVE YOU ACTUALLY THOUGHT THIS OUT?

EH-HH-HH-HHH?!
I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT WHEN I GET THERE.
DO YOU EVEN HAVE THE MONEY?
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT SCHOOL!
HOW ABOUT THE LANGUAGE? WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO SLEEP?


I WAS WONDERING WHEN I SHOULD DO IT,
BUT I JUST DECIDED!
SINCE MY BODY'S IN A GROWTH PERIOD RIGHT NOW, I WANT TO TRY CHALLENGING TOP CLASS PLAYERS FROM OVERSEAS.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M NOT THINKING ANYTHING AT ALL.
BASED ON MY CURRENT SITUATION,
I SHOULD TRY CHANGING MY TRAINING METHODS OR MY ENVIRONMENT.

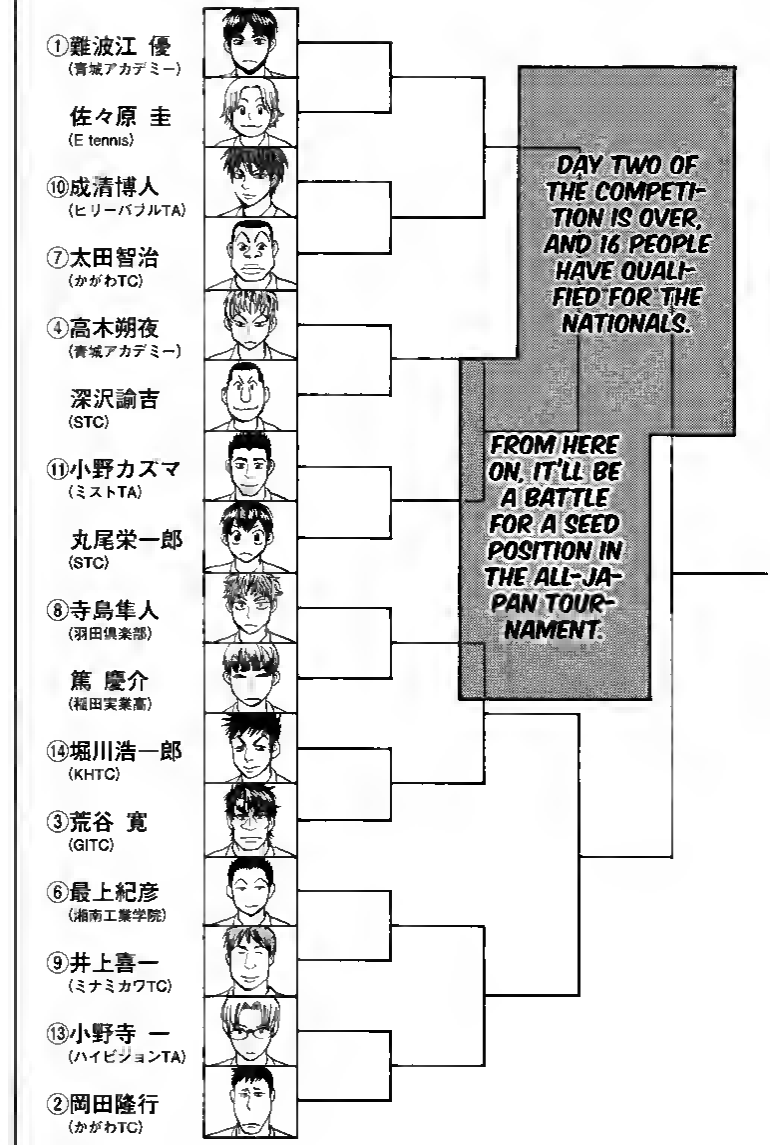
I'LL COME BACK AS A BETTER MAN.
YOU NEVER TAKE BACK ANYTHING YOU SAY, SO NO POINT TRYING TO CHANGE YOUR MIND
THAT MIGHT BE TRUE, BUT...
WE'LL MISS YOU A LOT, YOSHI.
WE'LL BE SUPPORTING YOU NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO.
DON'T FORGET TO STAY IN TOUCH.

ANIKI
~~~!!

We're all done with today's matches.
All staff, please meet in the Main Office..

I'M GOING TO THE NATION-ALS, TOO!!
FIRST NATIONALS
I WONN NNNN NNN!!
~~~

I ALWAYS THOUGHT ANIKI WOULD BE ALL TENSE AND NERVOUS FROM THE MATCHES WITH THE ALL-JAPAN AT STAKE,
BUT SCREW TENSE AND NERVOUS, YOU WERE GOING ALL LOVEY-DOVEY.
ARG
YOU KNOW HOW NO ONE PAYS ATTENTION TO A NON-PRO-CANDIDATE LIKE ME, RIGHT?
IT'S ALL THANKS TO ANIKI!
HUH?
WOW!
R-REALLY?! CONGRATULATIONS, YUKICHI-KUN!!
I DON'T KNOW IF I'M RELAXED OR SOMETHING, BUT RIGHT NOW I'M FEELING SUPER GREAT
ONCE I HEARD THAT, I WENT WAY PAST RAGE AND JUST OPENED UP.
LET'S DO OUR BEST IN THE NATIONALS!
I'M GLAD ANIKI WON, TOO.
WE'VE STILL GOT THE 3RD ROUND!
MY DREAM FINALLY CAME TRUE...
C-CONGRATULATIONS!
I CAN SORT OF UNDERSTAND HOW HE'S FEELING..
It's thanks to me?
6-4, 3-6, 6-4, A GRAND VICTORY AFTER AN EPIC BATTLE!!


①難波江 優
(青城アカデミー)
佐々原 圭
(E tennis)
⑩成清博人
(ヒリーバブルTA)
⑦太田智治
(かがわTC)
④高木朔夜
(青城アカデミー)
深沢諭吉
(STC)
⑪小野カズマ
(ミストTA)
丸尾栄一郎
(STC)
⑧寺島隼人
(羽田倶楽部)
篤 慶介
(稲田実業高)
⑭堀川浩一郎
(KHTC)
③荒谷 寛
(GITC)
⑥最上紀彦
(湘南工業学院)
⑨井上喜一
(ミナミカワTC)
⑬小野寺 一
(ハイビジョンTA)
②岡田隆行
(かがわTC)
DAY TWO OF THE COMPETITION IS OVER, AND 16 PEOPLE HAVE QUALIFIED FOR THE NATIONALS.
FROM HERE ON, IT'LL BE A BATTLE FOR A SEED POSITION IN THE ALL-JAPAN TOURNAMENT.

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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

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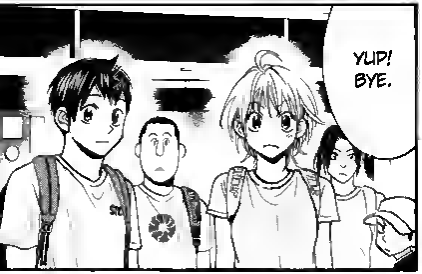
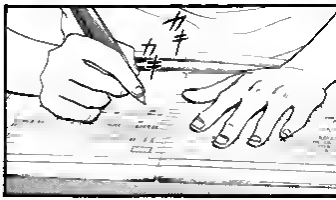


#156: A FRIEND'S FRIEND

I COULDN'T HAVE REACHED IT
IF I HADN'T DEFEATED IDE-KUN
おめでとう!!
IT GOES TO SHOW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO GET INTO THE NATIONALS...

OKAY. I'M DONE.


カキ
カキ

EI-CHAN, ARE YOU THERE?
コンコン
!
SNORE
YUKICHI -KUN.... HUH...?
HE'S ALREADY FAST ASLEEP.
OH, NOTHING IN PARTICULAR.
AH! THERE YOU ARE.
NACCHAN, WHAT'S WRONG?
I WAS WONDERING WHAT YOU WERE DOING~

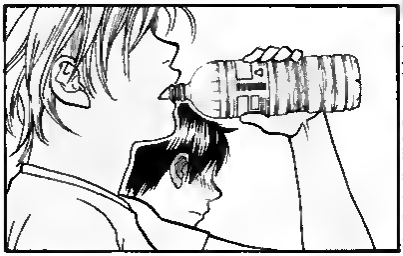
DID YOU CALL YOUR PARENTS ALREADY?
NOPE. I'LL DO IT LATER.
TODAY'S TOP STORY! HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SUCCESSFULLY QUALIFYING FOR THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR,
MR. MARUO?
TEE-HEE-HEE
Sti

HUH?
WOAH, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
IT'S A MOCK INTERVIEW.
HOW WAS IT, MR. MARUO?
UMMM... TODAY'S MATCH WAS SUCH AN IMPORTANT MATCH FOR MY PROFESSIONAL CAREER, SO I AM VERY GLAD I WAS ABLE TO WIN.
MR. IDE'S PLAYS WERE NOT ONLY UNPREDICTABLE, BUT ALSO EXTREMELY AGGRESSIVE, SO I WAS IN A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION. BUT THE EXPERIENCE I GAINED FROM PLAYING AGAINST NACCHAN A FEW MONTHS AGO WAS EXTREMELY HELPFUL.
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I PLAYED IN FRONT OF SO MANY PEOPLE, SO I WAS FEELING A LOT MORE PRESSURE THAN I EXPECTED.
LOOKING BACK, I THINK IT WAS A REALLY THRILLING AND CRUCIAL MOMENT OF MY LIFE.
ANYWAY, I WAS ABLE TO DO MY VERY BEST
AND WIN AGAINST AN EXTREMELY STRONG OPPONENT, SO IT WAS A GREAT MATCH.
53

IF POSSIBLE, I WANT TO GET STRONGER
AND PLAY SUCH A MATCH AGAIN
ON THE PROFESSIONAL STAGE.
.....
SOMETHING LIKE THIS...?
HEY!! WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING?!
S-SO RRY...
IT WAS SO PERFECT!
W-WASN'T IT TOO PLAIN?
NOPE. IT SOUNDED JUST LIKE EI-CHAN!

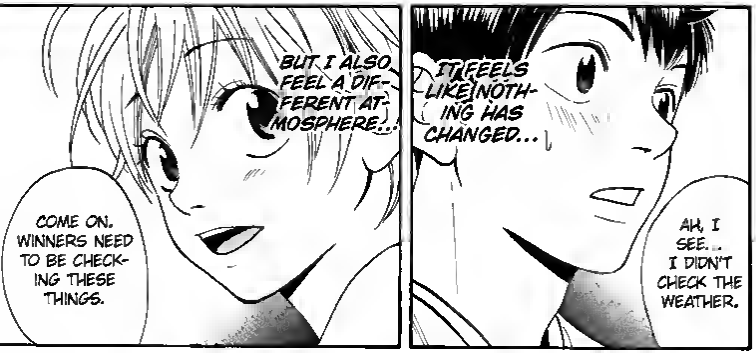
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THAT, ACTUALLY.
OH, THE THING CALLED "THE IDEAL CONDITION"?
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN THE "ZONE", NAC-CHAN?
AH, CHANGE OF TOPICS, BUT
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I PLAY UNBELIEVABLY WELL,
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS "ZONE" AND WHICH IS "RESULT OF HARD WORK"...
MAYBE IT'S TIMES WHEN I'M SO FOCUSED THAT I CAN'T QUITE HEAR THE CROWD EVEN THOUGH THERE'S A BIG AUDIENCE..
HMMM... I SEE.
SO IT'S SOMETHING EVEN PEOPLE AT NACCHAN'S LEVEL AREN'T SURE OF.
SHE MUST HAVE EXPERIENCED MATCHES LIKE THAT PLENTY OF TIMES... SHE IS CUTE... AND STRONG, TOO....
THAT'S RIGHT... NACCHAN'S MATCHES USUALLY HAVE ALMOST AS MANY SPECTATORS AS IDE-KUN'S...

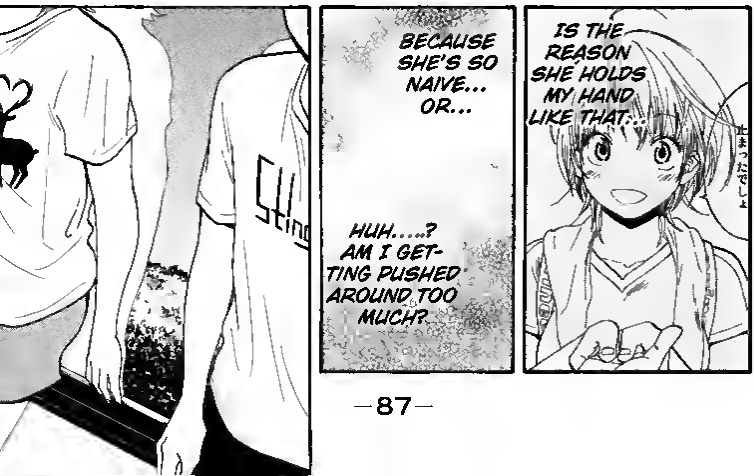
ミ…キッ



AND I'M GOING OUT WITH THAT VERY NAC-CHAN...
Strongly

I-I WONDER IF TOMORROW WILL BE HOT, TOO.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GOING OUT?
HUH? THEY SAY IT'LL BE JUST LIKE TODAY.


IT FEELS LIKE NOTHING HAS CHANGED...
AH, I SEE... I DIDN'T CHECK THE WEATHER.
BUT I ALSO FEEL A DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE...!
COME ON. WINNERS NEED TO BE CHECKING THESE THINGS.


IS THE REASON SHE HOLDS MY HAND LIKE THAT...
BECAUSE SHE'S SO NAIVE... OR...
HUH....? AM I GETTING PUSHED AROUND TOO MUCH?

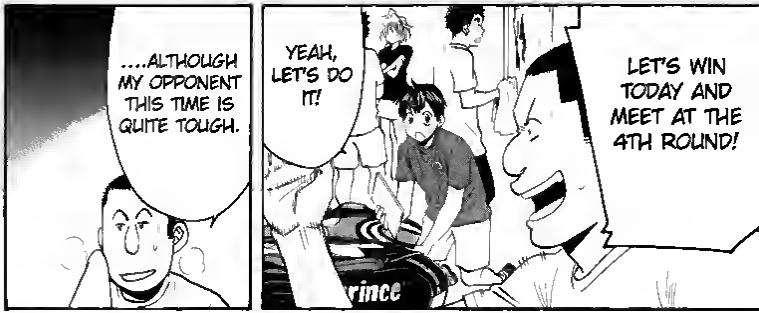
NACCHAN'S HAND WAS SOOOO SOFT~
INSTINCT
THAT'S RIGHT. WE'RE GOING OUT, SO THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH IT!
GOO OOO OO!
INSTINCT
REASON
HEY, HEY! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THE ATMOSPHERE IS TOTALLY OFF!
REASON
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING! NO PROB-LEM! NO PROBLEM!
INSTINCT

COOL DOWN FOR A BIT!!
ゴッ
ドカッ
REASON
MY INSTINCT'S GOTTEN A BIT TOO STRONG THESE DAYS.
BUT IS IT A GOOD THING?
ゴホ
ゴホ
Are you okay?
ビクッ
HUH..? DID SHE NOTICE?!
C'MON, QUICK!
PUT YOUR HAND ON TOP, AND
Huh?!
TOP?
...HERE.

WE'D BETTER GO BACK TO OUR ROOMS NOW!
GOOD? OR BAD?
EH, UM MM... THAT WAS...
GO OO OO OO
LET'S
WE'LL DO OUR BEST TOMOR-ROW!!
KANTO JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION DAY-3

OKAY, FROM NOW ON, YOU ARE FIGHTING AGAINST TOP PLAYERS WHO EARNED THEIR SPOT IN THE ALL JAPAN JUNIOR.
THE RESULT OF TODAY'S MATCH WILL HAVE A HUGE EFFECT ON HOW WELL YOU DO AT ALL-JAPAN.
CONSIDER THIS THE BEGINNING OF THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR!!
DON'T FORGET THAT YOUR SEED POSITION WILL BE DECIDED BY THESE MATCHES!
YES, COACH!!

YUP!
I WANNA GO AS FAR AS I CAN THIS TIME!
I FEEL LIKE I CAN WIN IF I PLAY LIKE I DID YESTERDAY.
YUKICHI-KUN... YOU'RE SO PUMPED UP.
UWOOOOO
ハァハァ
ハァハァ
ハァハァ


....ALTHOUGH MY OPPONENT THIS TIME IS QUITE TOUGH.
YEAH, LET'S DO IT!
LET'S WIN TODAY AND MEET AT THE 4TH ROUND!

NABAE-KUN, MORNING.
OH, GOOD MORNING, MARUO-KUN.

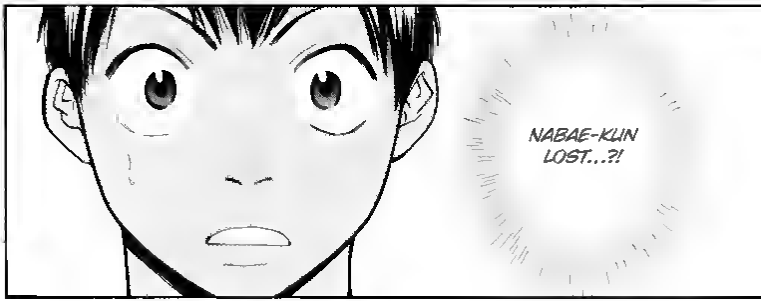
YOU DID GREAT YESTERDAY AGAINST IDE.
THANK YOU! I WAS ABLE TO CALM MYSELF DOWN AFTER NOTICING YOU WERE THERE.
AH... THAT'S RIGHT.
HE~Y, TAKAGI!
WHAT, NABAE.
THIS GUY'S IN THE SAME CLUB AS ME, TAKAGI SAKUYA.
HE'LL BE PLAYING FUKUZAWA-KUN TODAY,
AND THERE'S A CHANCE THAT MARUO-KUN WILL PLAY HIM IN THE 4TH ROUND, SO I WANTED TO INTRODUCE HIM.

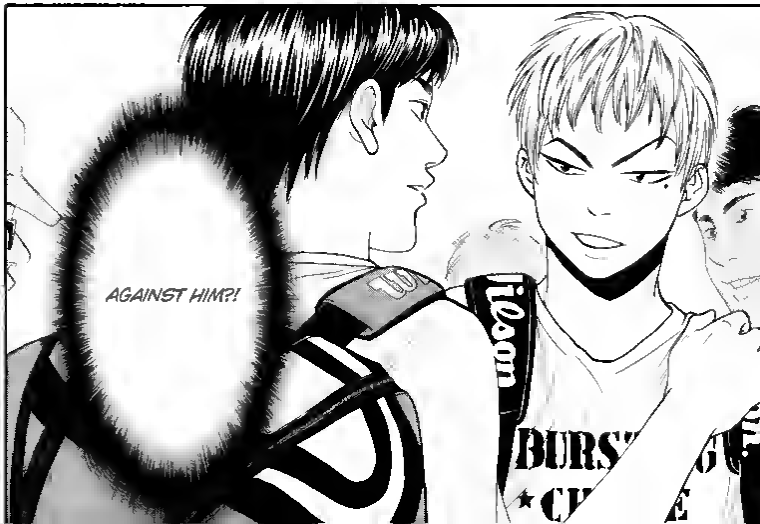
THIS GUY...
IS THE 4TH SEED, TAKAGI SAKUYA!
MARUO...
AHH...
IS THAT IT?
HUH?
...SO?
YUP, THAT'S IT.
BURSTING CHARGE

I KNOW THAT ALREADY.
THEN INTRODUCE YOURSELF.
UMM .. SORRY ABOUT THAT..
I GUESS .. THEY'RE GOOD FRIENDS?
I REALLY HATE THAT GUY CALLED TAKAGI.
LOOK AT HOW HE ACTED IN FRONT OF YOU JUST NOW.
EVEN IF HE DEFEATED NABAE ONCE...

APPARENTLY, TAKAGI DEFEATED NABAE ONCE IN A PRACTICE MATCH AT THEIR CLUB,
ALTHOUGH I DON'T KNOW THE EXACT DETAILS.

AH, YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
...HUH?


NABAE-KUN LOST...?!


AGAINST HIM?!

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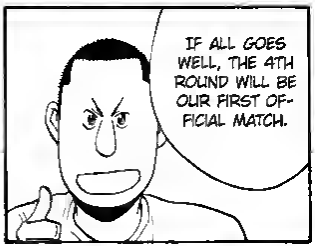
HE DEFEATED NABAE-KUN...?!
BURSTING
*CHARGE


IF ALL GOES WELL, THE 4TH ROUND WILL BE OUR FIRST OFFICIAL MATCH.

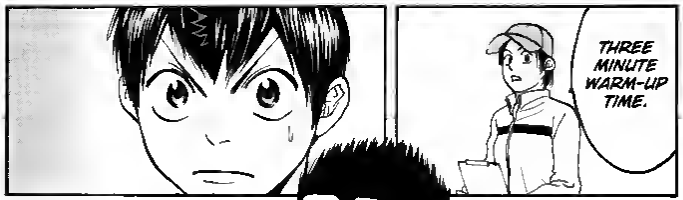
BUT I'M BEATING TAKAGI,
SO PLEASE WIN TODAY, TOO.
YUKI-CHI-KUN.

ANYWAY, FOCUS ON THE 3RD ROUND FOR NOW!!

...YUP.
LET'S DO OUR BEST!

#157: HERETIC

IT'S NOW 10:30.
PLAYERS, PLEASE ENTER THE COURT.


THREE MINUTE WARM-UP TIME.

ONO KAZUMA (MIST TA)
CHIBA PREFECTURE COMPETITION BEST 4, 11TH SEED.
campus notebooks contain the best ruled fools

ALTHOUGH THERE'S NO DANGER OF UNPREDICTABILITY LIKE WITH IDE-KUN,
HIS DEFENSE IS STRONG, SO I CAN'T BE TOO CARELESS WITH MY ATTACKS.
EVEN THOUGH HE IS A HIGH-RISK FLAT HITTER, HE MAKES FEW MISTAKES AND USES HIS STROKES TO PUSH THROUGH.
IS HOW WELL I CAN STAY FOCUSED WITH MY ATTACKS.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT AGAINST DEFENSIVE PLAYERS LIKE HIM...
THERE'S QUITE AN AUDIENCE, NO SURPRISE, CONSIDERING HE'S A SEEDED PLAYER.
THE BEST OF THREE SET MATCH. MARUO, SERVICE PLAY!

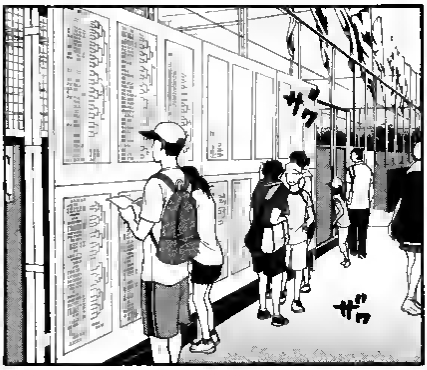
BUT COMPARED TO MY MATCH AGAINST IDE-KUN, THERE'S HARDLY ANY PRESSURE.
FIRST, MAKE SURE THIS FIRST SERVE GOES IN ..
TRAP MY OPPONENT INTO MY PACE
AND KEEP THIS FIRST GAME FOR SURE!!
HA
10
1
7

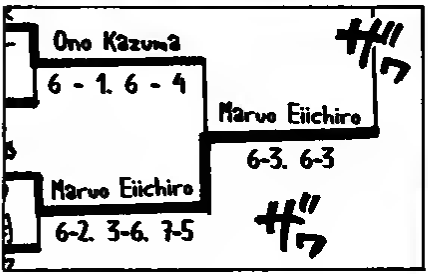
IT'S IN...!
HA
TARGET THE SHALLOW SHOTS EVEN IF IT'S A STRONG FLAT!!

IF THAT DIDN'T FINISH IT...
ARGH
HA

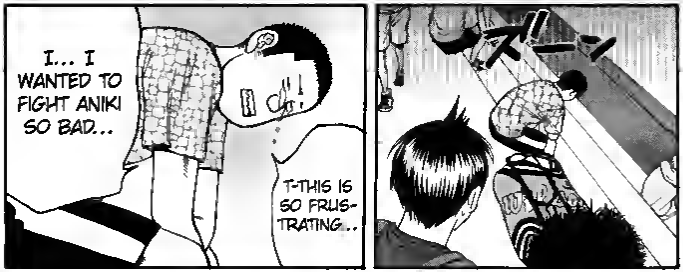
EVEN IF HIS REACTIONS WERE SLOW, HE'S USING HIS LEGS TO CATCH UP QUICKLY AND RETURN WITH A STRONG SHOT...
15 - 0
ALL RIGHT!
GOOD JOB, MARUO!
HE REALLY IS PRETTY GOOD.
T-THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO SEE ME PLAY?!
APPARENTLY, HE'S NO 2 IN KANAGAWA EVEN THOUGH HE WASN'T SEEDED.
HE WAS INCREDIBLE IN YESTERDAY'S MATCH AGAINST IDE.
HUH...

DON'T TRY TO IGNORE IT AND DEAL WITH IT LIKE I DID YESTERDAY...
JUST PLAY LIKE I USUAL ...IF THAT TURNS INTO PRESSURE,
NO, NO. DON'T GET DISTRACTED!
LET'S GO...!!
HA




Ono Kazuma
6 - 1. 6 - 4
Maruo Eiichiro
6-3. 6-3
Maruo Eiichiro
6-2. 3-6. 7-5

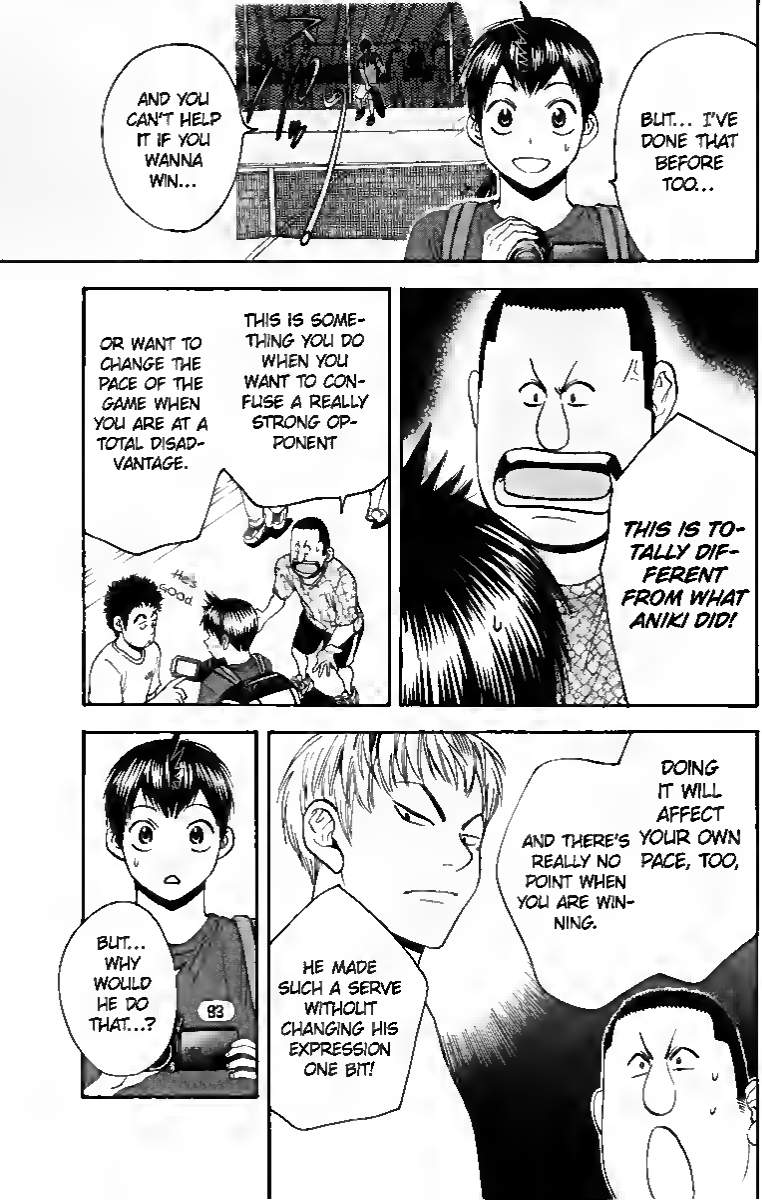
WELL, YOU BEAT SOMEONE LIKE IDE,
SO THERE'S NO WAY YOU WOULD'VE LOST TODAY.
YES
OKAY, GOOD WORK!
STC


I... I WANTED TO FIGHT ANIKI SO BAD...
T-THIS IS SO FRUS-TRATING...
ズーン

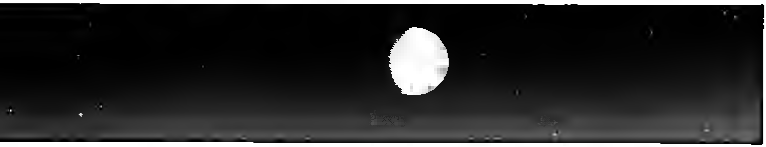
HMM? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
ANIKI!
THAT TAGAKI IS A REALLY HORRIBLE BASTARD, SO PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

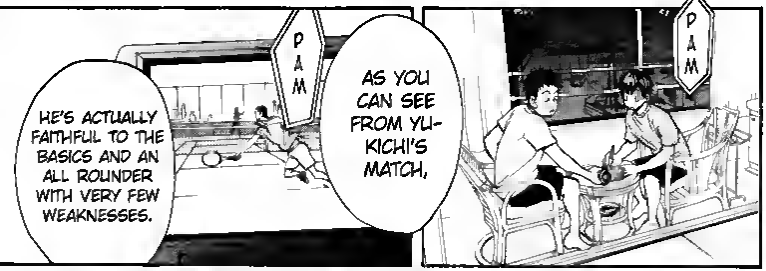
!?
HE GAVE ME AN UNDER-HAND SERVE WITH A SU-PER-WILD SPIN.
THAT BASTARD... EVEN THOUGH HE WAS LEAD-ING IN THE FIRST SET BY 4-2,
TAKAGI SAKUYA
FUKUZAWA YUKICHI
4
2
30 - 0.

ARGH
40 - 0.
GRRRR!! SO AN-NOYING!!
HERE'S THE VIDEO.
AH... HE'S RIGHT.


AND YOU CAN'T HELP IT IF YOU WANNA WIN...
BUT... I'VE DONE THAT BEFORE TOO...
OR WANT TO CHANGE THE PACE OF THE GAME WHEN YOU ARE AT A TOTAL DISADVANTAGE.
THIS IS SOMETHING YOU DO WHEN YOU WANT TO CONFUSE A REALLY STRONG OPPONENT
He's good
THIS IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT ANIKI DID!
BUT... WHY WOULD HE DO THAT...?
93
HE MADE SUCH A SERVE WITHOLIT CHANGING HIS EXPRESSION ONE BIT!
AND THERE'S REALLY NO POINT WHEN YOU ARE WINNING.
DOING IT WILL AFFECT YOUR OWN PACE, TOO,

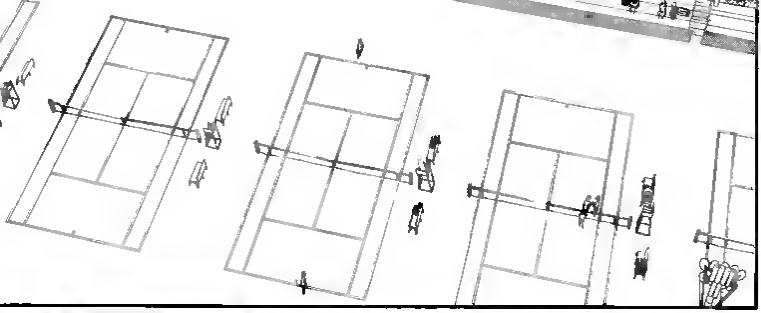
HE DECIDED TO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME AFTER BREAKING AND TAKING A TWO POINT LEAD, THAT BASTARD!!
OF COURSE, IT'S 'CAUSE HE WAS LOOKING DOWN ON ME!
SO I DID END UP LOSING DUE TO OUR DIFFERENCE IN SKILL.
...REGARDLESS, HE WAS PRETTY STRONG AS EXPECTED FROM A 4TH SEED,
高木朔夜 55
32
...IS THAT REALLY THE CASE?
PAM
Y-YEAH, I'LL DO MY BEST.
SO PLEASE WIN AND TAKE MY REVENGE!
BUT STILL... I CAN'T FORGIVE SUCH A CHEEKY BASTARD!

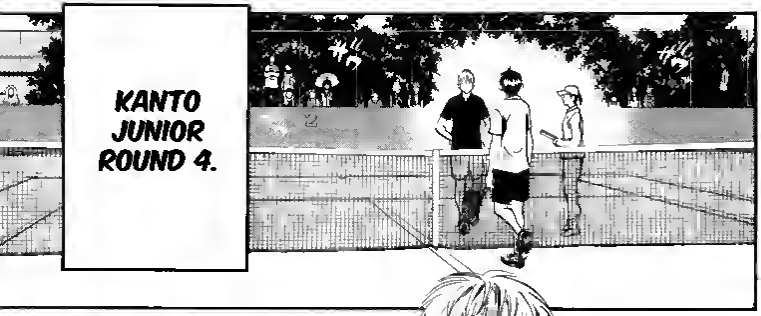



PAM
AS YOU CAN SEE FROM YUKICHI'S MATCH,
HE'S ACTUALLY FAITHFUL TO THE BASICS AND AN ALL ROUNDER WITH VERY FEW WEAKNESSES.
PAM

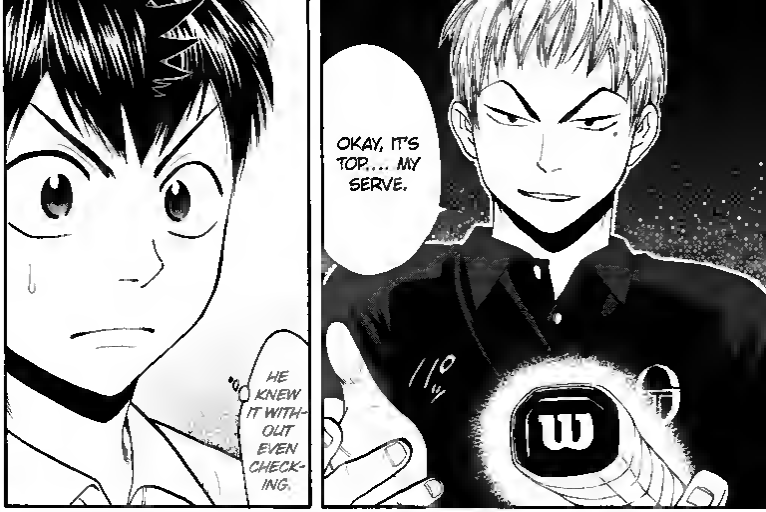
I CAN DEFINITELY TELL THAT HE'S STRONG.
YOU SHOULD BE CAREFUL.
AND THOSE SHOTS ARE PRETTY HIGH QUALITY, TOO.
ALTHOUGH HE DOES SEEM TO USE TRICKY MOVES LIKE UNDERHAND SERVING OR DROP SHOTS ONCE HE TAKES THE LEAD.

I WONDER HOW HE DID IT?
PAM
BUT THIS PERSON BEAT NABAE-KUN...
IN ORDER TO DO THAT, I'VE GOT TO BEAT THIS PERSON FIRST...
TO WIN THE ALL JAPAN JUNIOR, I DEFINITELY WANT TO FIGHT AGAINST NABAE-KUN AT KANTO.
TAKAGI SAKUYA

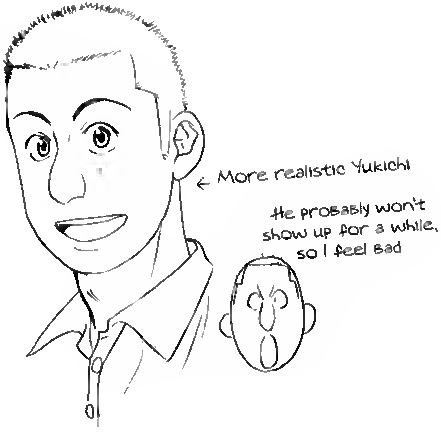



KANTO
JUNIOR
ROUND 4.

THAT WAS QUITE A WEAK TOSS.
I'LL GO WITH BOTTOM...
MMMM
オイ


HE KNEW IT WITHOUT EVEN CHECKING.
OKAY, IT'S TOP.... MY SERVE.

LET'S HAVE A GOOD MATCH!
....ANYWAY, I'LL DEFINITELY WIN!!


← More realistic Yukichi
He probably won't show up for a while, so I feel bad

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Baby Steps

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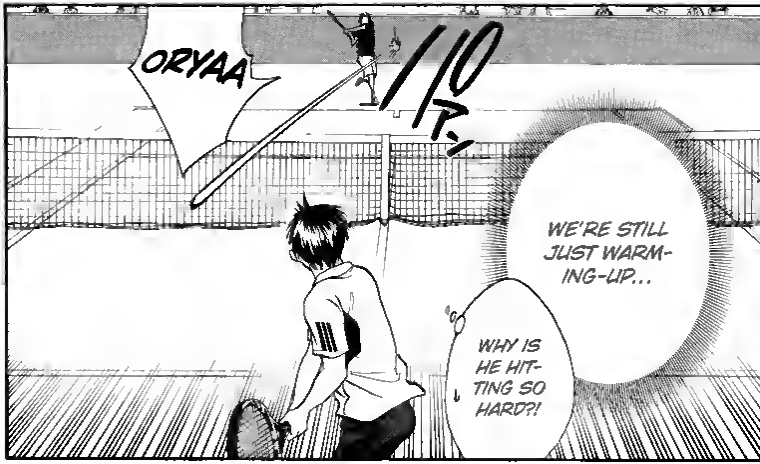
#158: IMPULSE

AS EXPECTED OF THE 4TH SEED, HIS SHOTS ARE HEAVY AND DEEP...
...BUT


ORYAA
WE'RE STILL JUST WARMING-UP...
WHY IS HE HITTING SO HARD?!

THIS GUY IS REALLY STRANGE...

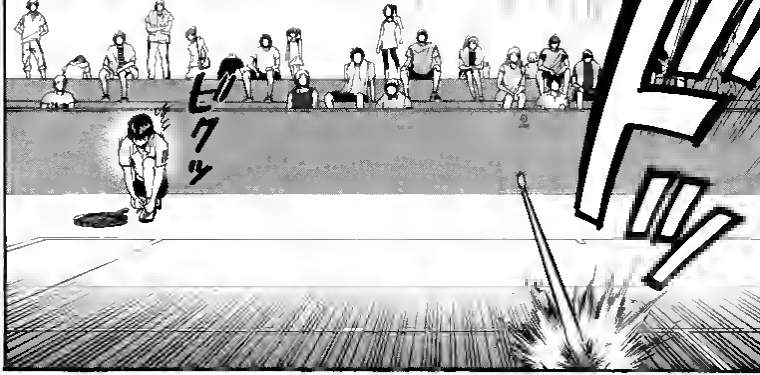
2
THE BEST OF THREE SET MATCH.
TAKAGI SERVING!

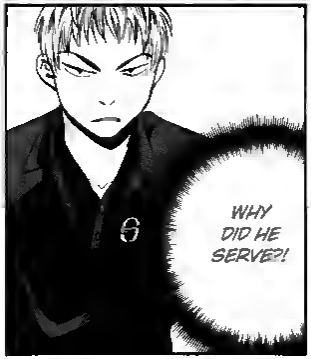
FAST!!

AND HIS BACKHAND CONTROL IS PRETTY GOOD..
RGH
15 - 0.
SERVE AND STROKES.
HIS BASIC SHOTS ARE OF HIGH QUALITY!!
I CAN'T BE DISTRACTED BY HIS STRANGENESS...
adidas

IT'S MY RETURN GAME, SO I CAN'T HELP GETTING SUPPRESSED, BUT...
HA
SOME-THING..
KEEPS BOTHER-ING ME...
YEAH!
30 - 0.

じっ
ISN'T HE STARING AT ME WAY TOO MUCH?!
ギン
!
WHY IS HE SO IRRITATED EVEN THOUGH HE'S WINNING POINTS WITH EASE?
P-PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR A SEC!


ヒクッ


WHY DID HE SERVE?!

WAIT, WHAT ...?

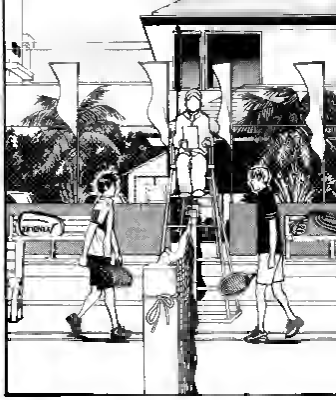
WOAH

He was so horrible, so please be careful!
YUKI-CHI-KUN SEEMED PRETTY FRUS-TRATED,
BUT I GUESS THIS IS HOW IT WAS.

THAT SERVE DID NOT COUNT.
MARUO CALLED A TIME-OUT BEFORE-HAND.

ORA
HA
GAME, TAKAGI. 1 - 0.

ARGH... HE'S STILL GLARING AT ME...
ジロ
ジロ



I CAN'T HELP BUT BE BOTHERED IF HE'S THIS WEIRD.

HONESTLY, WHAT THE HECK'S GOING ON ..?
じっ

ANYWAY, CALM DOWN AND KEEP A HIGH ACCURACY FOR THE FIRST SERVE...

STILL, THAT SHOULDN'T AFFECT MY MATCH STRATEGY...
トン
トン

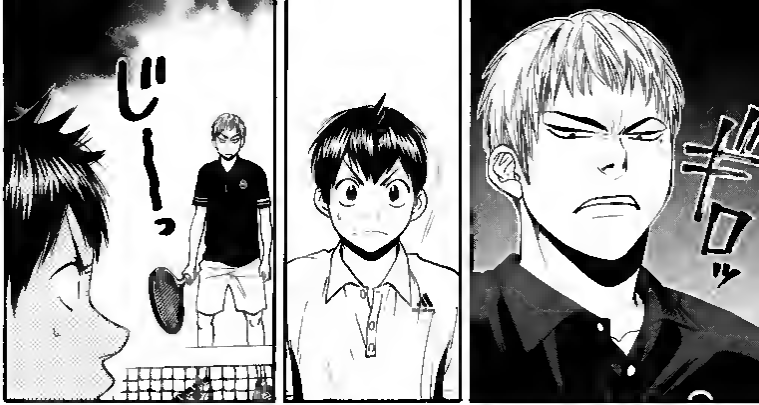
HA
AND KEEP MY GAME AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!!
WAS MY TEMPO OFF CAUSE I WAS TOO RUSHED?
FAULT

ORA!!

C'M ON!
RGH
0 - 15
IT'S ALL FOR DISRUPTING MY MENTALITY AND PROGRESSING THE GAME TO HIS ADVANTAGE.
ANYWAY ALL THESE UNCOMFORTABLE ATMOSPHERE IS ALL PART OF A STRATEGY.
I SEE... I'M STARTING TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE.

I HAVE TO STAY CALM AT TIMES LIKE THIS.
DON'T BE BOTHERED BY EVERYTHING HE DOES...
EVEN IF THAT DOESN'T WORK,
I JUST HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THE PRESSURES LIKE I DID THE DAY BEFORE.
パコン

15 - 15
YES!
adidas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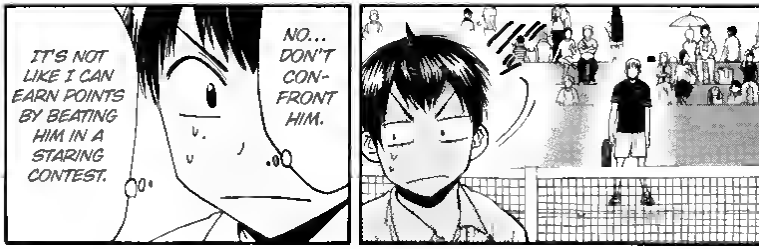
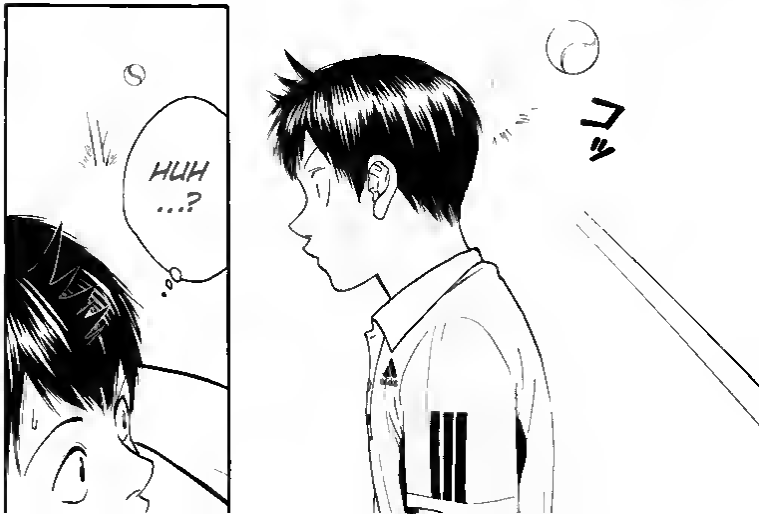

IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN EARN POINTS BY BEATING HIM IN A STARING CONTEST.
NO... DON'T CON-FRONT HIM.


HUH ...?
コッ

H-HEY!
PLEASE BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU ARE RETURNING THE BALL.
WAS THAT... TAKAGI-KUN RETURNING THE BALL?
TAKAGI-KUN, THAT WAS QUESTIONABLE.
IF I HAVE TO KEEP QUESTIONING YOUR MANNERS, I WILL BE TAKING A WARNING SO PLEASE BE CAREFUL.
HUH?
.....
OKAY ...

IT'S NOT LIKE HE GOT A WARNING FROM THAT,
SO I'M THE ONLY ONE THAT'S AT A LOSS...
ドク

ARGH... MY HEART BEAT'S RISING EVEN THOUGH I WASN'T MOVING MUCH.
AND TAKAGI-KUN SEEMS PERFECTLY FINE...
ドクドク

WHY DOES HE KEEP DOING THIS...
THIS GUY... EVEN THOUGH HIS NORMAL PLAYS ARE JUST AS STRONG...

A FRIEND OF NABAE-KUN?!
WHY IS SUCH A PERSON,

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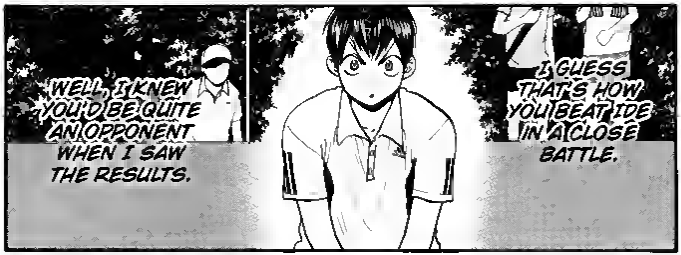
#159: TAKAGI SAKUYA

...THIS IS IT...!!
YES!
30 - 15.
DON'T RUSH, AND FOCUS ON CONTROL...

FAST ATTACK!!
ONCE I HAVE THE ADVANTAGE,
40 - 15.
AND DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT.
カリ
カリ
カリ

GAME, MARUO. COUNT: 1 - 1.
OKAY... !! I CAN KEEP MY GAMES.
I'LL KEEP THIS UP AND BREAK SOMEWHERE!!

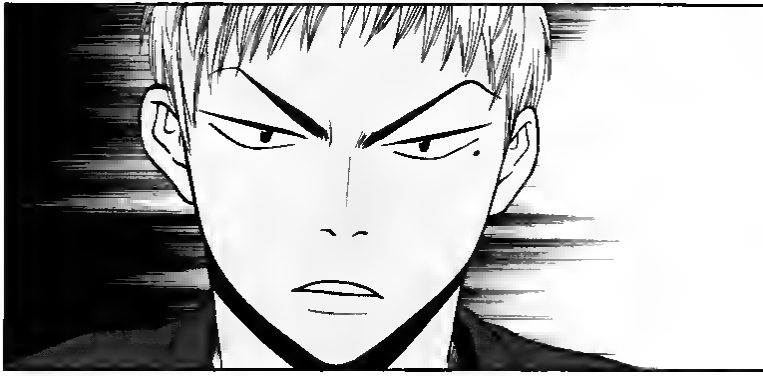
HE SEEMED LIKE HE WOULD FALL FOR IT, BUT HE DIDN'T...
HE'S GOOD AT CONTROLLING HIS EMOTIONS.


WELL, I KNEW YOU'D BE QUITE AN OPPONENT WHEN I SAW THE RESULTS.
I GUESS THAT'S HOW YOU BEAT IDE IN A CLOSE BATTLE.

EVEN IF YOU ARE A HIGHLY PROMISING, FAST GROWING PLAYER...
BUT I HAVE A REASON I CAN'T LOSE THIS MATCH NO MATTER WHAT.

ドッ
!?

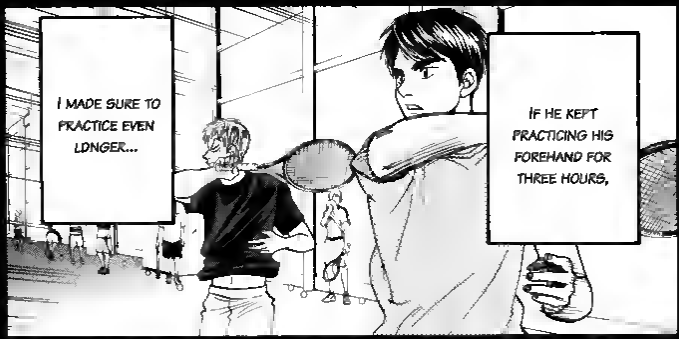
...HE DID IT ALREADY!



NABAE, CONGRATS!
I HEARD YOU WON THE NATIONALS
AND THAT DESPITE ONLY BEING A 2ND YEAR. INCREDIBLE.
WE'LL COME CHEER YOU NEXT TIME
YEAH, THANKS.
I WAS IN THE TOP 16 FOR THE NATIONALS TOO, YOU KNOW?
THANKS TO YOU, I DON'T EVEN GET MENTIONED
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO...?

WELL, THE REASON THIS GUY'S STRONGER THAN ANYONE ELSE IS SIMPLY BECAUSE HE'S BEEN TRAINING MORE SERIOUSLY THAN ANYONE ELSE.
DAMN IT, I'M SO LAME...
THANKS TO SUCH LITTLE THINGS BUILDING UP, NAMAE GOT STRONG
WHAT'S HE DOING?
UMMM...
HIS THOROUGH SELF-ANALYSIS AND STRENGTHENING OF BASIC SKILLS IS UNBELIEVABLE.
EVER SINCE HE WAS LITTLE, HE'S BEEN THINKING OF TENNIS BOTH ON AND OFF THE COURT.
IT WOULD'VE BEEN EASIER FOR ME IF HE WAS A MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD GENIUS
WHAT THE HECK IS HE THINKING?
BUT I COULDN'T QUITE RECOGNIZE HIS GENIUS BACK THEN.

I THOUGHT I WOULD BE ABLE TO BEAT HIM IF I DID THAT.
THAT'S WHY IF NABAE RAN 10KM, I RAN 15KM.


I MADE SURE TO PRACTICE EVEN LONGER...
IF HE KEPT PRACTICING HIS FOREHAND FOR THREE HOURS,

I FELT LAME ABOUT LOSING AFTER WORKING SO HARD, SO I DID MY BEST TRAINING BY MYSELF.
WE WERE IN THE SAME CLUB AND HAD PRACTICE MATCHES ALL THE TIME.

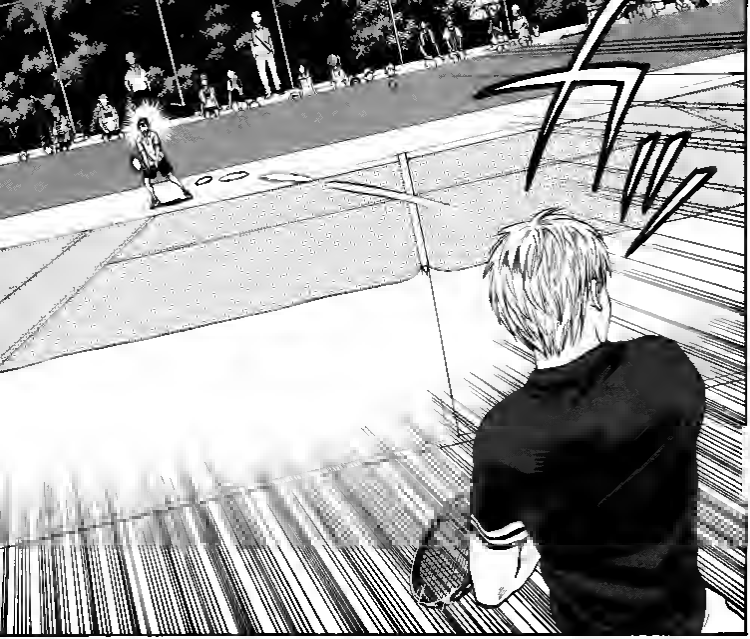
As a result, I became strong.
But I couldn't beat Nabae.
Then what am I supposed to do...?

HELL NO.
DON'T CHICKEN OUT JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE ABOUT TO LOSE.
HEY...
IT'S LATE ALREADY, SO LET'S STOP.
YOU JUST DON'T WANT TO LOSE AGAINST ME FOR THE FIRST TIME
HUH?
I MEAN, IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT. WE HAVE TO PRACTICE TOMORROW, TOO, AND WE CAN PLAY AGAIN ANY TIME, RIGHT?
EVEN OFFICIAL MATCHES GET SUSPENDED AFTER SUNSET.
THAT'S NOT IT.

I'M NOT GONNA ACCEPT SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
THIS ISN'T AN OFFICIAL MATCH.
THIS IS A BATTLE BETWEEN YOU AND ME
YOU KEEP MAKING MOVES THAT ARE BORDERLINE ILLEGAL.
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO WIN THAT BADLY?

Even if it's stupid and lame, I want to win at least once.
That's right.
DON'T BE SO COCKY!!
Okay.
I'll reflect on my actions after I win.
I can't move on from here if I don't defeat you at least once.
Play for real, okay?

IT'S 4 - 3.
HERE I GO!
!?



UNDER-
SERVE!

I'LL DO ANY-THING IF IT'S WITHIN THE BOUNDARY OF REGULA-TIONS.
I'LL BE THE ONE TO DEFEAT NABAE!!

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I'LL BE THE ONE TO DEFEAT NABAE!!
!?
#160 CARDS ON HAND
UNDER-SERVE!!
IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO FAST!

THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN HIT DOWN THE LINE WITH THAT STANCE.
BUT IF HE PUTS THIS MUCH CONTROL AND SPIN ..
RGH
15 - 0.

ギロッ
I NEED TO REACT FASTER.
IT'S FASTER THAN WHAT I EXPECTED FROM WATCHING THE VIDEO.
AND IT'S A SERVE I HAVE ALMOST NO EXPERIENCE WITH...
SINCE I'M SUPPOSED TO MATCH MY OPPONENT'S SERVES, IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
JUST DON'T BE BOTHERED.
HE'S STILL STARING AT ME...
HE HAS TO SERVE WITHIN 25 SECONDS REGARDLESS, SO JUST FOCUS ON THE BALL...
DON'T FORGET THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONSECUTIVE UNDERSERVE.
adidas
じっ

COME ON, ANYTIME NOW!
.....
HYAA

THE TEMPO'S QUICK!!
THAT WAS... A QUICK SERVE.
HE CAN DO THAT, TOO?
QUICK SERVE
YOU HIT WHEN THE BALL IS ON ITS WAY UP
NORMAL SERVE
YOU HIT WHEN THE BALL IS ON ITS WAY DOWN
30 - 0.
おぉ
ARGH...
ギロッ
HE CERTAINLY HAS A WIDE RANGE OF SKILLS

HE HITS TRICKY SHOTS WITH A STRAIGHT POKER FACE.
IT'S PROOF THAT BOTH HIS MIND AND TECHNIQUE'S ARE WELL TRAINED.
IT'S A LOT HARDER TO PLAY THAN I THOUGHT...

BUT... DOES THAT MAKE IT OKAY FOR HIM TO DO WHATEVER HE WANTS?
I CAN REALLY FEEL HIS DESIRE TO "WIN" MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

カキ カキ カキ
カキ カキ
カキ
TAKAGI SAKUYA
2
MARUO EIICHIRO
1
I CAN'T QUITE PUT MY FINGER ON IT, BUT HIS TENNIS FEELS VERY SIMILAR TO NABAE'S.
IT'S THE BEST STYLE TO TEST MY STRATEGY
TIME!
UNTIL THEN, I NEED TO KEEP MY GAME NO MATTER WHAT...
IF I CAN TAKE HIM DOWN ONCE I FIND AN OPENING...
IT'S OKAY EVEN IF I CAN'T TAKE THE LEAD RIGHT NOW.
カキ カキ
カキ カキ

HA
TO DO THAT, FIRST SERVE!!

OKAY!

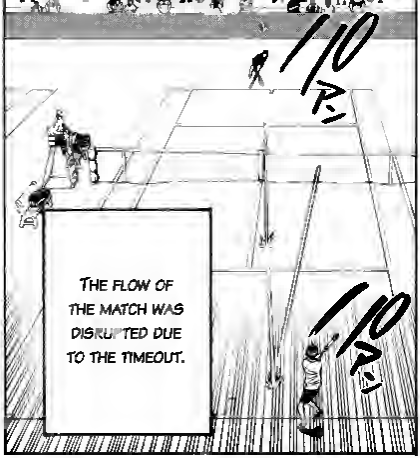
MARUO, PLEASE DO YOUR FIRST SERVE AGAIN.
I'M SORRY, I WASN'T READY.
WHAT?!
THAT PERFECT TIMING... HE MUST BE QUITE USED TO IT.
T-THAT WAS A SERVICE ACE...
FOCUS...!
YOU MIGHT NEED A DIFFERENT MENTALITY THAN THE ONE YOU NEEDED TO BEAT IDE.

Despite the persistent technical and psychological disruption,
Eiichiro somehow manages to maintain high accuracy on his first serve without surrendering his lead, and
keeps the 4th game with 2 - 2.

On the other hand, Takagi mixes unethical actions and unorthodox plays with his highly accurate shots.
It wasn't easily to break this erratic tennis.
Both players continued to keep their service game and made it to Game 9.

HA
TAKAGI SAKUYA
4
MARUO EIICHIRO
4
EIICHIRO TAKES THE OFFENSIVE AS HE TRIES TO WIN THE SET.
アン
0 - 30.
HERE IT IS! MY CHANCE TO BREAK!!
adidas

HUH.... WHAT NOW?
EXCUSE ME.
MY LEG IS FEELING STRANGE,
SO CAN I TAKE THE MEDICAL TIMEOUT?
M-MEDICAL TIMEOUT?!
IS HE OKAY?
HE SEEMED FINE UNTIL NOW...
Medical Timeout
During play, if a player's medical condition requires doctor's attention or emergency treatment, the player can contact the umpire for a three minute timeout to address that medical condition


THE FLOW OF THE MATCH WAS DISRUPTED DUE TO THE TIMEOUT.

RGH
THE ONE WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE CHANGE WAS TAKAGI.

HA

GAME, TAKAGI. 5 - 4.
HIS LEG IS TOTALLY FINE.

WOULD A NORMAL PERSON GO THAT FAR?
SO HE USED THE MEDICAL TIMEOUT TO DISRUPT THE FLOW THAT WAS GOING AGAINST HIM?
SO WAS THAT FAKE?
EVEN IF IT WASN'T, IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN EX-AGGERATION...

AMAZED...
YOU KNOW, IF HE GOES THIS FAR, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL...

EVEN IF YOU HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, HOW CAN YOU DO THESE THINGS WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MOMENTUM?
HOW DO YOU EVEN COME UP WITH THAT STUFF?
NOT ONLY IS HE STRONG, HE THOROUGHLY UNDERSTANDS THE RULES AND DOES UNBELIEVABLE THINGS WITHOUT HESITATION

...THERE'S NO TIME TO BE AMAZED...
AH
DOES IT MEAN HE HAS LOT OF CARDS ON HAND IN A DIFFERENT MANNER THAN NABAE-KUN?

TIME!
THE QUESTION IS, HOW AM I GOING TO CONFRONT THIS...
OKAY!
IF HE'S GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS OPTIONS..

HA
アー
THEN I'LL DO THE SAME...!
ダッ

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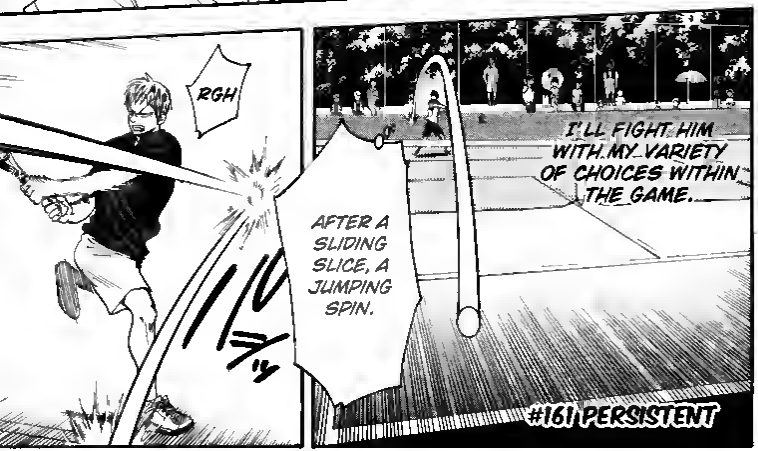
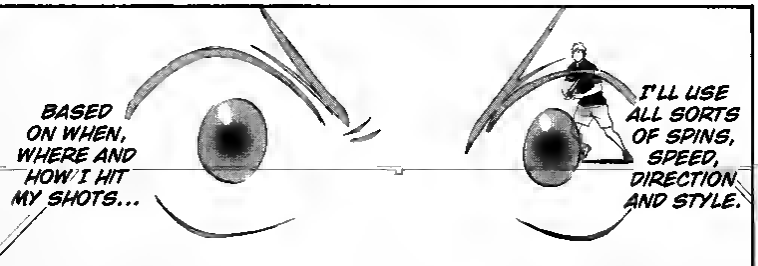


#161 PERSISTENT



I'LL OVERCOME ALL HURDLES WITH MY OWN STRENGTH!
I AM WHO I AM.
MY OPPONENT IS MY OPPONENT.

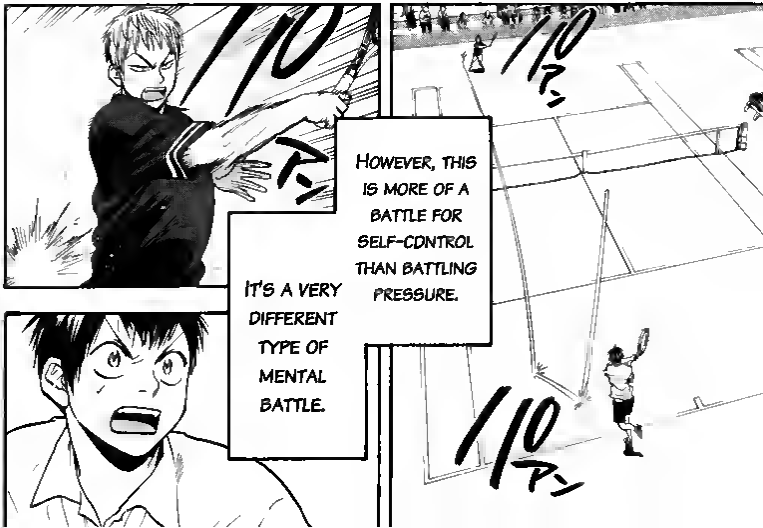
THE NUMBER OF ATTACK PATTERNS IN A CHANGE OF PACE IS THEORETICALLY INFINITE!!
アー
ドゥ

SLIDING AND KICKING. WHAT AN ANNOYING SHOT.

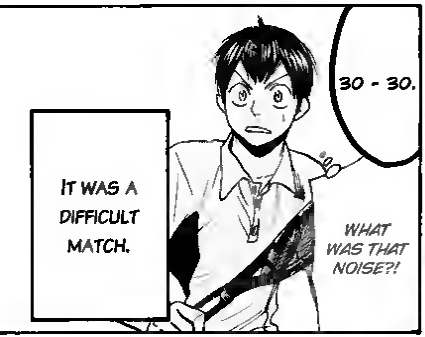
YES!
15 - 0.

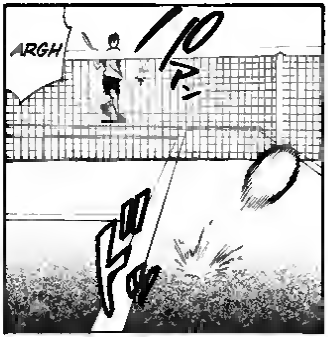
GAME, MARUO. 5 - 5.
MARUO KEEPS GAME 10.
110 アン

MARUO USES THE MENTAL CONTROL HE ACQUIRED IN THE MATCH AGAINST IDE
"I am irritated by Takagi-kun's unethical plays
I'm bothered by an eerie feeling
THE FOLLOWING GAME 11, IN ORDER TO BREAK USING HIGH-RISK ATTACKS,


110 アン
HOWEVER, THIS IS MORE OF A BATTLE FOR SELF-CONTROL THAN BATTLING PRESSURE.
IT'S A VERY DIFFERENT TYPE OF MENTAL BATTLE.
110 アン
110 アン

FOR INEXPERIENCED EIICHIRO,
ビクッ
ドン


IT WAS A DIFFICULT MATCH.
30 - 30.
WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?!


ARGH
パン
ドサッ

パン

ORA
パン

I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO MOVE FORWARD...

*Tie break: If the match goes to 6 – 6 in the first or second set, the one who takes seven points first with a two point lead takes the game.

I SOMEHOW MANAGED TO KEEP
TAKAGI SAKUYA
6
MARUO EIICHIRO
6
EVEN IF IT'S 6 - 6, I TOOK MORE POINTS,
SO I SHOULD BE BETTER OFF IN A TIE BREAK.

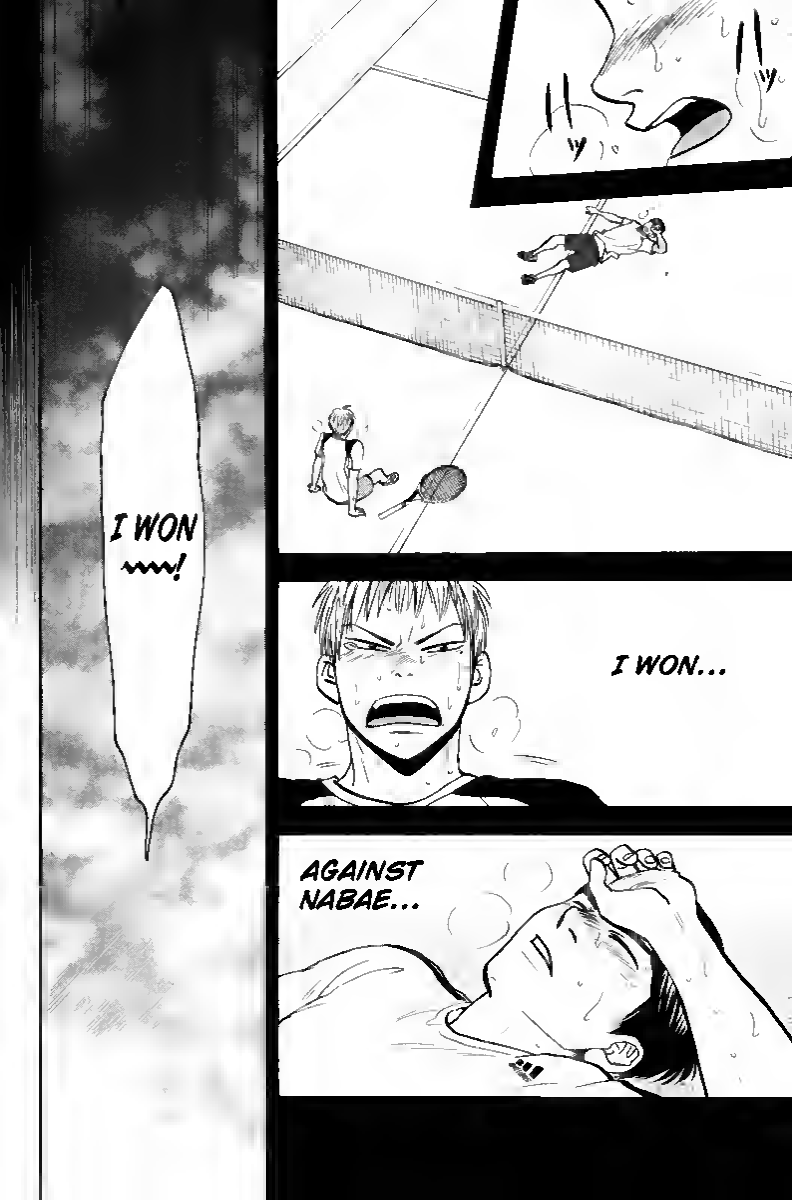
CONCEN-
TRATE ON
MY OWN
TENNIS
STYLE!
GAHHH

6 - 3, GAME.
TRYING TO DISRUPT YOUR OPPONENTS' CONCENTRATION OR TAKING PEOPLE BY SURPRISE.
IF YOU KEEP RELYING ON SUCH CHEAP TRICKS, YOUR TENNIS SKILLS WILL STOP IMPROVING.

NEXT...
セェ
セェ
STOP TRYING TO END IT WITH A LOUSY LECTURE AND RUN AWAY
THAT WAS THE 9TH SET. CUT IT OUT A-
I'M ABOUT TO GET THE HANG OF IT.

ORAA
ぎゅん
HA... IF YOU ARE TIRED, THEN WHY DON'T YOU JUST LOSE AND REST IN PEACE?
ハッ
ハッ
IN TERMS OF PURE QUANTITY, I'VE BEEN PRACTICING WAY MORE THAN YOU....
!?
!!
!!

IF IT'S A STAMINA BATTLE, THEN I HAVE A CHANCE.
JUST SO YOU KNOW, YOU CAN'T WIN WITH JUST STAMINA
ピク
Phew
ハアハア
ハアハア


I WON
wwww!
I WON...
AGAINST
NABAE...

4 - 3.
MARUO.
AGI SAKUYA

ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE BEST TO AVOID A LONG BATTLE,

SO IF I TAKE THIS, THEN I'LL HAVE A HUGE AD-VANTAGE..
IF YOU LOSE THE FIRST SET, YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ENTER A STAMINA BATTLE.

I'LL BE TAKING THIS ONE...
FOR ME TO GO ALL OUT IN THE NEXT SET...
HA
SO I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE ONE MORE LEAD AND ATTACK.
I'M LEADING THE SERVES BY ABOUT ONE BALL..
FLOP

ARGH.. NICE SERVE!
A DROP SHOT HERE?!

OR IS HE GOING TO TRY BUNTING IT?!
IF HE WANTS TO PASS ME, IT'S RIGHT, LEFT, OR UP...
!!

BODY?!
WHY WOULD YOU GO FOR THE HIGH RISK CHOICE?!
SHOOT ....

TO BE CONTINUED
IN VOLUME 18

Baby Steps

These two have the same facial structure, so I mixed them up a lot. But since Ide makes expressions that Ei-chan will never make. It was fun drawing him.

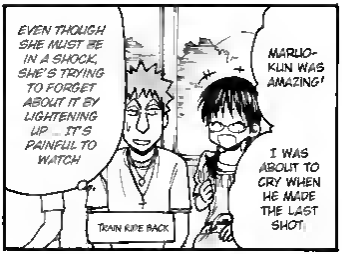
Hi, this is Kaboku.

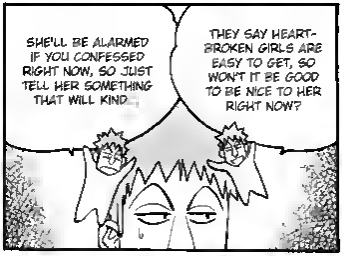
The Ide Match that started in volume 15 is finally over. I was aiming for a really wild Match, but I'm sad that it doesn't feel too different from the usual.

They say that Ide is "like a classic protagonist," but to be honest, I'm not good at making protagonists like him. I think it's because he's too different from the real me. Whether or not the "unlikely protagonist" Ei-chan is portrayed as a proper hero. That is the key of this manga.

See you next volume, then!

ON THE WAY BACK


EVEN THOUGH SHE MUST BE IN A SHOCK, SHE'S TRYING TO FORGET ABOUT IT BY LIGHTENING UP... IT'S PAINFUL TO WATCH
TRAIN RIDE BACK
MARUO-KUN WAS AMAZING!
I WAS ABOUT TO CRY WHEN HE MADE THE LAST SHOT!


SHE'LL BE ALARMED IF YOU CONFESSED RIGHT NOW, SO JUST TELL HER SOMETHING THAT WILL KIND...
THEY SAY HEART-BROKEN GIRLS ARE EASY TO GET, SO WON'T IT BE GOOD TO BE NICE TO HER RIGHT NOW?